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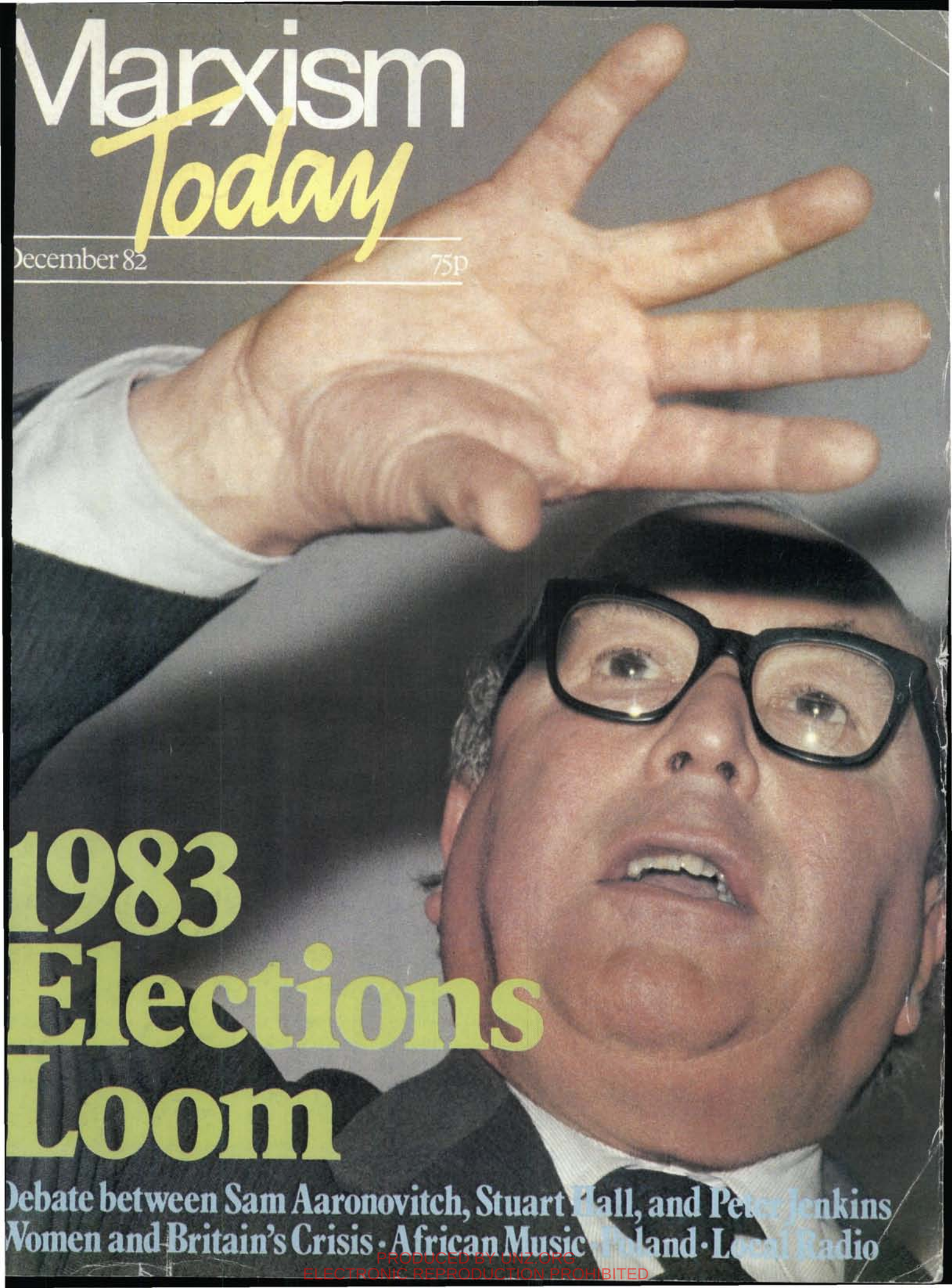

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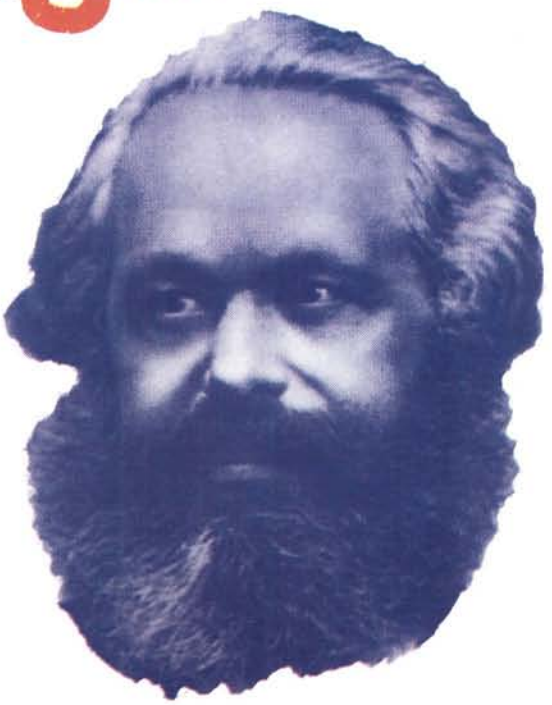

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THE GREENS

Talk of 'breaking the political mould' became current in Britain even before the genesis of the Liberal-Social Democratic Alliance. And yet, as the recent spectacular electoral achievements of the West German Greens show, the country in Europe where that process is most clearly and excitingly underway is not Britain but the Federal Republic.

In the thirteen state elections that have taken place in Germany since 1978, the Greens have secured an aggregate support of well over 1.5 million votes, which has not only enabled them to win parliamentary representatives in six out of the eleven state parliaments in the Federal Republic, but also placed them in the position of actually holding the balance of power in the states of Hamburg and Hesse.

There is thus every prospect that at the next general election — which has been tentatively promised for March 1983 by the new Chancellor Helmut Kohl — the Greens could become the third most popular party in the country and so break the stranglehold which the CDU (Christian Democrats), the SPD (Social Democrats) and the FDP (Liberals) have held over West German parliamentary politics since the early 50s.

As far as the status of 'political mould-breaker' is concerned, the Greens enjoy at least two advantages over the British contender for the title. Firstly the West German political system is based on proportional representation, which in this case means that at either national or state level any party obtaining 5% of the vote is guaranteed parliamentary representation. This 5% hurdle is currently working to the disadvantage of the West German Liberals who are now paying the price for their part in the recent overthrow of the Schmidt government and have been eliminated from the Hamburg, Hesse and Bavarian state parliaments in the three elections held this year.

The second thing which differentiates the position of the Greens from that of the British Social Democrats is that they represent a genuinely new political force rather than just a realignment within the old established parties. For, despite the decision taken early in 1980 to found the Greens as a national party, they still see themselves as an extra-parliamentary *movement* which, focusing on the issues of ecology and peace, derives its main impetus from grass roots activity and concerted mobilisation around local questions.

This, together with their self-characterisation as 'the anti-party party' has provided the Greens with a broad appeal that more or less cuts across the whole spectrum of West German politics, embracing conservatives as well as socialists, the previously apathetic as well as the radical activists.

The Greens first emerged as a cohesive movement around the mid 70s and at that time they represented an amalgam of four distinct political strands. Two of these, the Green Action for the Future and the Bavarian Greens, saw themselves as the environmentalist voice of conservatism. A third force was represented by activists from disbanded left wing groups and the residue of the anti-authoritarian student movement which had been unable to find a political home in either the SPD or the West German Communist party and now regarded ecology as the main lever for social change. The fourth and in many ways most important strand, however, was constituted by the plethora of local action and 'citizens' initiative' groups in West Germany, for it was these that were crucial in rallying support around local issues and democracy.

Since the early stages of their formation, however, there has been a distinct change in the political complexion of the Greens. For the ascendancy of the 'left' faction within the movement has led it to broaden its concerns beyond purely ecological matters and embrace a whole range of issues (such as the rights of women and homosexuals, political discrimination *[Berufsverbot]* and, above all, nuclear disarmament) for which there is little or no support within the major parties. Whereas initially members of the Greens were united only by their rejection of nuclear power and their demand for environmental protection, now — as a recent

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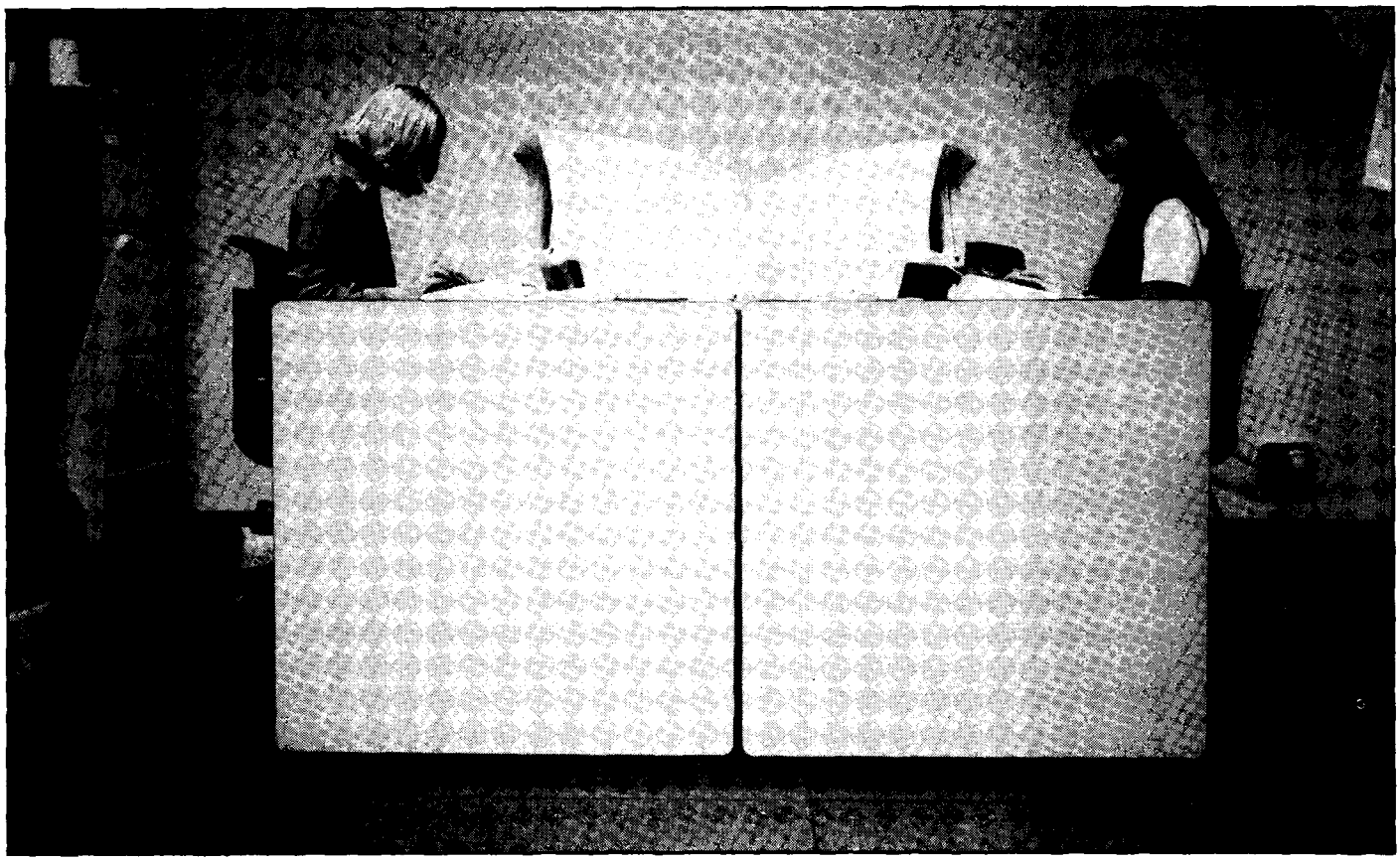

survey commissioned by *Der Spiegel* demonstrates — the supporters of the Greens are more homogenous in their views than those of any other major West German political party.

The immediate prospects for the Greens thus seem to be highly promising. In the long term however, they are faced with three possible dangers to their burgeoning popularity. The first concerns their fear of being contaminated by what they hold to be the compromises of power. As Petra Kelly, the Party chairwoman (and former SPD member), put it recently: 'I am sometimes worried that the Greens will suddenly get a 13% vote and so become a party seeking power. It would be better to keep our support down to 6% or 7% and thus remain uncompromising as far as our basic demands are concerned. Better to do that than to provide Cabinet Ministers.' While the political integrity of these sentiments is beyond dispute, the Greens could nonetheless find that such an attitude leads to parliamentary stalemate (as is currently the case in both Hamburg and Hesse) and thus to a succession of elections; it may well be that their support suffers as a consequence. The second danger is the obverse of the first, namely that they become so enmeshed in the institutional trappings of parliamentary democracy that they neglect or become divorced from their extra-parliamentary roots.

The third threat to the Greens' popularity, however, in a sense lies outside their control, and that is the change that might overcome the Social Democrats now that they are once again the party of opposition. Under Schmidt's leadership the SPD had undergone even further erosion of its socialist vision, but although Schmidt himself remains implacably hostile to the Greens, there are important voices within the SPD leadership who see the way forward for the party as lying precisely within the terrain of struggle presently occupied by the Green movement. Most notably Willy Brandt recently called for 'a new majority this side of the CDU, including peace groups, environmentalists, women's groups and the like'. Even if the Greens could claim nothing else, to have helped revitalise the almost dormant conscience of West German social democracy would itself be no mean achievement.

Robbie Burns

WOMEN AND OFFICE WORK

Hunched over a keyboard with fingers flying and eyes darting between screen and paper has become one of the most common positions of a woman officer worker. Yet beneath its familiar surface, the picture can tell a more intricate story. The question of the value placed on a job a woman does is a twofold one: is her work labelled unskilled, and paid accordingly, precisely because it is a woman doing it; has the job been designed according to implicit and explicit assumptions that the female part of the workforce are best suited to and quite willing to undertake boring and repetitive work?

For the Swedish Union of Clerical and Technical Employees in Industry (SIF) the answer to the latter half of the question is a definitive yes. And in the context of computerisation pushing forward a radical restructuring of office work, SIF has set itself the task of intervening in the process of job design itself, rather than simply attempting to protect those jobs which are prime candidates for re-organisation and/or automation. Sweden, like the rest of Europe and the US, has seen the introduction of computer systems which rely on vast quantities of data-inputing by female clerks to provide the information processing used by the higher clerical and executive grades. SIF are negotiating to introduce a job evaluation scheme which would up-grade routinised jobs and so make it very expensive for employers to implement systems based on this skill polarisation in the office.

The scheme falls into two parts — firstly a more conventional evaluation, splitting job grading into four levels based on the degree of problem solving, knowledge, diversity and autonomy required by the work tasks. Secondly SIF propose that points should be

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awarded to job factors such as monotonous work, visual strain, controlled work, confinement at a work station, time pressure on the worker, uncomfortable working positions. The logic of their challenge to a new technology which produces down-graded work for women is not to create the conditions for a trade-off between high pay and boring work, but rather to find means of bargaining to enlarge jobs and prevent the design of ghettoes of constrained, meaningless work. In terms of winning employer commitment to this, SIF realistically assess that fine words about the undesirability of de-humanised jobs, could become more than promises only if the price is set high in money terms, as opposed to the hardly weighty cost of employers' ruffled social consciences.

At present SIF represents 85% of the clerical workforce in private industry in Sweden, which presents a very different situation to that of clerical workers in the USA, only 10% of whom are unionised. But office workers are organising in The States and the issue of re-evaluating women's work is an important focus of their demands. 9 to 5, the National Association of Working Women, which helped to produce the script for the film '9 to 5' where a revolt against the office boss' patriarchal ways led to women taking over and running the office, see job evaluation schemes as a way of changing what it's argued is an under-evaluation of women's work. 9 to 5 see a major cause of women's low-pay, low-skill position in office work as not so much the content of the work that they do, but that it is women who are seen to be doing it.

It is an irony that an often-voiced management concern over gaining employee acceptance of job evaluation is that workers see the grading as based on an estimation of the person rather than the job. No doubt resistance to management instigated job evaluation techniques has a lot to do with employee fears that their ability to do the job is being examined, but in the case of women workers, a belief that it is their gender which is being evaluated ('if it's a woman doing it, it can't be difficult') may not be misplaced. 9 to 5, when dealing with a job evaluation scheme in California for service employees, discovered that in terms of confronting this hidden level the process of evaluation was as important as the outcome. Having found that despite union representation on the grading committee, workers were being overwhelmed by the so-called 'science' of the scheme, they set up workshops run by the union to coach women in describing their skills.

It became clear that much of the work women did was either invisible to the organisation they worked for or else included unrecognised degrees of skill and complexity, which once articulated by the employees ensured up-gradings. But not only did the two year long evaluation produce higher rates of pay for these workers, it provided a means of organising and through the struggles which took place over job definitions, new levels of awareness and activism developed within the workforce.

Examples such as this have led US managers to push for the opening of a new institute to design job evaluation schemes specifically for work with new technology. By creating a rigidity in the schemes which can be labelled 'scientific', they hope to avoid the growth of militancy in office workforces sparked off by negotiations over job skills and definitions. Aware of this attempt to dissipate potential challenges to managerial estimations of job contents, 9 to 5 recommend the rejection of outside consultants' participation on any job evaluation schemes.

It is interesting to compare the approach taken by SIF and 9 to 5 to the question of skill levels in women's jobs. Both organisations see a number of hidden and not-so-hidden assumptions operating in relation to 'women's work' which act to reinforce women's worse position in office work. The strategy adopted by 9 to 5 places more emphasis on re-evaluation than re-design of jobs. One of the reasons for this difference is a recognition of contradictions running through the relatio of American women to the most routinised work. Key punch operating which is the office work closest in form to the assembly line, has a surprisingly low labour turnover in the US — 4 years as opposed to 2.6 for other clerical workers. Less surprisingly, it has the highest proportion of black and minority women in clerical occupations — 22%. Given the difficulties these women experience in getting any kind of employment, it is easy to see how an attempt to out-price this sort of work could be felt as extremely threatening to these workers.

But the importance that both SIF and 9 to 5 attach to using job evaluation as a means for organising office workers, provides a useful perspective in relation to Britain. A wariness amongst British trade unionists when it comes to engaging with points schemes and factor evaluations may reflect an accurate understanding of management attempts to impose an apparently neutral ad external arbitrator of wage claims. But the thinly-disguised 'science' can be challenged. And without a prioritising of issues concerning skill, women office workers will not only remain categorised as unskilled, they can be forced further into jobs designed on the assumption that if it's boring, a woman will do it.

Eileen Phillips

STEEL: PROTECT AND SURVIVE

While Mrs Thatcher is busy battering the steel industry down to a size consistent with her contracted vision of the future for manufacturing, it is instructive to reflect on the very different fate of the British and European steel industries in recent years. UK steel production will this year be at best half of the 1970 level. Had Britain been in the EEC in 1970, it would have held one fifth of Community output: in June this year the figure was 12%. The UK has suffered nearly half of the total Community job loss since 1973.

The principal explanation lies, of course, in the long decline of the domestic market, and its rapid collapse since 1979. From a reduction in manufacturing industry's activity of one fifth stems a proportionate fall in home steel demand. And given the dwindling influence of the state on steel markets, the propensity of what is left of UK industry to buy UK steel is falling. British Shipbuilders, for example, buys over 90% of its steel requirements at home: what price that trend after the privatisation promised by the Government for the new parliamentary session?

The Government has had some success in diverting attention from the effects of its policy of depressing steel demand and focusing it on trends in international trade. Adherence to Cobdenite nostrums is common within the establishment. BSC Chairman Ian MacGregor, reflects this consensus and resists protectionist arguments with references — accurate enough — to the high percentage of gross domestic product exported by Britain. But steel has moved in recent years from being one of the most freely traded international commodities to a prime target for restraints. The last few weeks alone have seen the USA force the EEC, under duress, to reduce its exports by nearly 9% and govern them by quotas, while on the other side of the world steel workers stormed the Australian parliament in protest against the imposition of what they saw as inadequate tariff barriers against imports. These are but two incidents in a secular trend. In 1980 25% of world steel production was traded: it will be a long time before that happens again.

Britain's steel trade problem is a Cerberus: one head — imports — is biting ever larger chunks out of a declining home market; the other — export potential — is faced

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with *anorexia nervosa* following the imposition of broad import quotas by the United States. 200,000 tonnes of export sales have been lost by BSC alone in this, the largest foreign market for UK steel. Moreover Britain also has some alarming imbalances in its steel trade with South Africa, South Korea and other countries: with most of the world. There are now leaks in the press about the Government turning from Cobden to Chamberlain and tariff reforms. Actually there are already constraints on trade through our membership of the EEC, but these are not efficacious since ⅔ of our steel imports come from within the Community. These government leaks would appear to be inspired more by a desire to influence November's General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) talks than by any desire to plan trade. Indeed, the Tories have been indifferent to the fact, as can be seen by the table, that higher domestic steel prices and a modest upturn in demand during the first half of the year actually led to a fast growth in import tonnages.

% increase over previous quarter

	UK Consumption	*UK Imports*
2nd quarter 1981	−5.5%	+8.2%
3rd quarter 1981	+0.1%	+1.5%
4th quarter 1981	+2.0%	+19.4%
1st quarter 1982	+13.2%	+10.0%

In the USA Reagan deflated his own economy and then partially shielded American companies from the effects with import quotas. Thatcher has been administering the same medicine for twice as long but without protectionism. If she now launches into it, the benefits are dubious. Britain needs capacity adequate for an economic upturn and the freedom to negotiate the trade acts it needs. Both would be ruled out by Britain's adherence to EEC pacts. The EEC has presided over the disintegration of the UK steel industry and has not prevented a swingeing contraction of export markets.

But there is a danger of labour movements in different countries having their attention diverted from the enemy at home to the 'enemy' abroad. US steel production has fallen 38% this year but its *total* domestic market has fallen 34%. Thus it is Reaganomics which has produced a situation where a given level of imports represents a far greater market share. Similarly in Britain, imports are actually only slightly above the levels of 1979, our last 'normal' year. But the *total* market is 20% smaller so the share of imports is larger. The lesson is that trade planning without domestic expansion will merely box us in to a smaller market.

Martin Upham

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Anne Showstack Sassoon

Dual Role: women and Britain's crisis

As part of a growing recognition that the current crisis of British society is different from any previous one, most of the Left acknowledge that 'women's demands' have a new importance. Yet, what the Left fails to understand and what we in the women's movement find hard to articulate, is the way that women are *central* to our crisis and how their demands are not merely sectional. In fact, unless we take the position of women as a starting point, we will never understand the detailed reality of important aspects of Britain's crisis or the dilemmas it poses for the Left. Women are 'new' subjects because we are asserting new needs and new desires. Insofar as society has been organised around a role for women which we are rejecting, we are amongst the chief agents of this crisis and of a different future.

A central contradiction

The *norm* today is for women to have a *dual* role: in the home and in paid labour. The vast majority now have a continuous role in the paid labour force with only a short interval when their children (probably only one or two) are very small.[1] By the same token, very few men have wives who stay at home full-time to service them and their children.

A dual role for the vast majority of women in society is a recent phenomenon. After remaining static for about a century at 30-32%, the proportion of women workers began to increase in the 1950s, and after a dramatic rise in the 1970s, women now make up more than 40% of the workforce. Unlike earlier periods, an overwhelming majority of married women, 59.4%, now work. This rises to 67.1% after 35 when children are most likely to have started school, and to 71% by the time the youngest child is 10 years old.[2] This increase has taken place because the biggest growth areas in the economy have been precisely in traditional 'female' areas: in the service and state or tertiary sectors and in part-time work. That is, the influx of women into the labour force parallels a structural change in the economy.

And yet, although women are in the labour force on this massive scale, society as a whole has not really accepted this fact of life: the domestic sphere, the world of work, the welfare state are all organised *as if* women were continuing a traditional role. Women remain the backbone of domestic labour; the world of work is organised around a 'male model' which assumes one human being at work for 40 hours a week (plus commuting and possibly overtime) plus a partner available full-time for domestic tasks; the institutions and practices of the welfare state are organised around the same traditional model of work and domestic life.

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The way changes in women's lives have produced conflicts in different spheres of social life is a central element in Britain's crisis. This tension is reflected in the choices made by women in which the need and desire to *combine* having children and to remain in the labour force structures their lives. It runs through the organisation and the economy of the household, and it is

an overwhelming majority of married women now work

manifest at the level of collective reproduction of society as a whole.

In investigating these contradictions I have a particular starting point: a woman who seeks part-time or full-time paid work, is in domestic partnership with a man, has one or more children, lives in a new version of the nuclear family. *Most* women are heterosexual, *most* are in and out of a more or less 'permanent' relationship with a man, *most* have one or more children, and the vast majority are in paid work for most of their lives. This is *not* a *prescriptive* model but rather a *description* of an important *part* of reality which also has implications for households organised differently or without children. While this is my focus, I will also try to consider the role of men from a particular perspective. Men's role has remained relatively static. In order to have a greater chance of changing their role, we have to go beyond mere condemnation of the *status quo* to consider the practical dimensions of changing a series of concrete factors which now reinforce that role.

Women's choice to have children and to go to work

In considering the effects of the changes in women's lives on the different spheres of society, I start with what is the disruptive element in the situation: the choices made by individual women. Women tread a minefield of contradictions as they attempt to fulfil what are now contradictory desires and make a series of choices about marriage, children, and work in the face of a variety of constraints. On the one hand, given the lack of childcare and other services, the costs for most people of combining two jobs with even one small child are extremely high in physical and emotional energy as well as economic terms, and in fact only 7% of women with the youngest child below 5 work full-time.[3] On the other hand, so are the costs, economic and emotional, for women of continuing in a traditional role.

What then are the costs and benefits which women weigh up and what constraints do they face in the choices they make? Let us look first of all at the choice to have children which creates conditions which fundamentally structure a women's life. Adequate birth control and the achievement of legal abortion has expanded our freedom enormously and allowed us to talk about a choice for the mass of women. Yet, abortion and contraception are only the beginning of expanding our *freedom* because the decision is made in certain conditions. Not only is abortion a difficult decision and an awkward procedure for many women, but the decision to *have* children is also difficult. The choice to have children is taken in the context of a need and a desire by the majority of women to be active in the labour force but without any freedom of choice about childcare or general domestic arrangements. The fall in the birthrate in industrially advanced countries is undoubtedly linked to the fact that we can choose but must make this *choice* in these *conditions*.

Having children is no longer a 'natural' fact but a conscious decision. If it is taken today, it is because having a child is not simply imposed by social convention but is an experience that many women (and men) positively seek, something they consider a 'benefit'. Indeed, the experience of having children involves not just demands and responsibilities, but a series of positive, personal pleasures which are not often discussed. Women do not want to be trapped at home, but they and many men, too, want to be able to spend time with their children. So we arrive at the fact that most women choose to have children although they are choosing to have fewer of them.

A constraint on the freedom of that choice is lack of alternative childcare arrangements. This is not just another 'women's demand'. The fight for nursery, afterschool and holiday facilities corresponds to the needs of millions of people, bringing benefits not just to women and not just to one class. A political argument which has to be made very forcefully is that it needn't be the case that the needs of children are contradictory to the needs of women. Moreover, properly organised, socialised childcare not only brings great benefits to all children, but the intellectual, social and creative stimulation provided by nursery and other school provision benefits children from less privileged backgrounds proportionately *more*. A mother or any parent on her/his own simply cannot provide the range of enriching activities that a nursery can. It also serves as a safety valve for the isolated overly intense relationships that can so easily develop in a nuclear household. Thus the struggle to give people a choice of more socialised childcare is a battle not just for women but also for children and one which extends across social groups. And to the extent that many households depend on a woman's wage, which I discuss below, it is also in the interests of most men.

Varying needs

Yet when we look closely at the practicalities of providing real choice in childcare arrangements, we find that taking care of these needs is no easy feat because they are so complex.[4] We require a flexible, sensitive response rooted in the collective experience of millions of women and children in the context of women's dual role. This experience tells us that providing good nursery facilities is only the beginning.

From the point of view of the individual, the need for services changes dramatically as children get older, and at any one moment from the point of view of society as a whole, there is an enormous variety of needs to be provided for. Once children start school not only do they require supervision after school, but there is a whole range of activities, as things are now organised which require an adult to accompany them. Later a parent needs the time and energy to give support to a teenage daughter or son.

Yet, despite inadequate services to meet these needs, women still combine having children with paid labour. How do people cope now? In fact most people depend on a network of informal relations, increasingly friends rather than family, especially in emergencies. In a sense a spontaneous social response to individual needs has grown up outside the state, a response which is flexible and intimate although with its own costs for women. There is an enormous burden of organisation and logistics involved which is experienced in a very isolated way — for example, when a child or baby-minder gets

[1] Women are out of the workforce on average a total of about 7 years or 16-19% of the time between the ages of 20 and 59. Joshi and Owen. *Demographic Predictors of Women's Work Participation in Postwar Britain*, Centre for Population Studies Working Paper 81-3 Aug 1981. From *The Fact About Women Is*, Statistics Unit, Equal Opportunities Commission.

[2] Dept of Employment Gazette 1981; General Household Survey Preliminary Results for 1981.

[3] General Household Survey Preliminary Results for 1980. The 1974 Office of Population Censuses and Surveys showed that by the time their children were two, 72% of parents wanted some form of childcare which rose to 91% by the time the children were four.

[4] Lack of space prevents me from discussing it, but another set of needs which particularly affects women and which will become increasingly important concerns the care of older people.

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ill, the school is shut for a day at short notice or during halfterm break, or something comes up at work. The problem is how to create a social response so that the burden is not just on individual parents and yet at the same time fits a large variety of circumstances and needs. We must fight for more sport, cultural and leisure activities which permit but do not require the participation of parents, for example. At the same time, the struggle for social provision of services must go hand in hand with the fight for changes which will make private arrangements easier. This leads us to a crucial constraint on the effectiveness of a reform like providing for socialised childcare facilities: the male model of work and the role of men.

Men and the male model of work

If women's choice to have children is taken in the context of a need and desire to have a paid job, the very form of paid work is a primary obstacle standing in the way of a change in the division of labour between men and women. The only way the full development of childcare facilities will in fact help to liberate women from their double shift and disadvantageous relation to the labour market is to change the way work is organised.

The male model of full-time work explicitly assumes one human being in paid work for 40 hours or more a week. Implicitly, it is assumed that domestic tasks will be taken care of by someone else at home full-time. Almost no one enjoys the services of a full-time housewife any longer, and most domestic tasks are in fact only taken care of because women work a second shift. Shorter working hours and built-in flexibility in the organisation of work for *all* workers is important not only to alleviate the burden on women's shoulders — it is *essential* if we are to create the real premises for a domestic role for men. The male model of work does not 'fit' with children whatever the childcare arrangements. Whatever the domestic division of labour and however good the childcare facilities, a parent working full-time mainly sees her/his children in the rush to get ready in the morning and the hours after work when she/he is likely to be exhausted — or the kids are rested and full of life! Manual workers tend to work most overtime when their children are small[5], and many professional jobs (or at least a certain model of career) require long hours. In fact the structure of full-time work does not fit in with domestic needs in general — how many people take time off work or pretend to be sick to wait at home for the gasman or to go to the dentist?

What about men then? Why can't they help out? Given goodwill and a push plus an economic need for women to work, they can and do to a limited extent. Yet in order for the myriad of individual battles conducted by women on the domestic front to have a greater chance of success, they must have the backup not only of the wider ideological struggle but of changes in the model of work to make the transformation in the sexual division of labour more likely. At the moment long working hours, greater male earning power, the male model of work which assumes the existence of a full-time wife (even if she doesn't exist), and the fact that there are only 24 hours in the day vitiate against a big change in the way childcare and domestic responsibilities are shared, if at all,

> the less the welfare state does, the more is done by women and vice versa

between men and women. They add up to a series of excuses more or less valid for men not to change.

Personal needs and domestic tasks have to fit in somehow, and indeed, the demands on time and energy that they require have implications for single people living on their own as well as in a nuclear household where both adults work. We could all use a full-time 'wife' and we all need mothering sometimes. With regard to childcare and other demands and needs, a man or woman working full-time, trying to perform in accordance with a male model of work encounters difficulties. Jobs with long hours (and these are not by any means only manual jobs), commuting time, working to deadlines etc assume a 'wife' at home or at the very least one with a flexible schedule, particularly if children are involved. With regard to man's or a woman's ability to fulfil what is required of them on a full-time job, it is costly for them to admit that private concerns affect their ability to work. In that sense women, whose dual role does not allow them to forget the contradictions between full-time work and domestic needs, are speaking for men as well as women when they object to the way that work is organised.

The division of labour which exists today in which men continue in a traditional role but women's lives have changed not only oppresses women but does not work very well. Yet we must recognise that dividing tasks between people can be a rational solution to their needs. What we have to do is create the conditions for new and different divisions of labour. The women's movement and the changes in millions of women's lives reinforce our determination to do battle with what often appears an immoveable object —men. One reason men resist change is because the new combination for the great majority of women of work and domestic responsibilities has barely had an impact on their lives. Although men's role has been challenged by women and by changes in the economy and society as a whole, their role has remained relatively static. Without ignoring the effects of male unemployment, a man's relations between home and paid work have not fundamentally altered, and a man's period in paid work is more continuous than a woman's. By contrast the life cycle of most women is discontinuous with rapid changes in the nature of domestic responsibilities as children are born, go to school, and grow up and parents become elderly, and as women move in and out of full-time or part-time work. A cultural revolution on the part of men plus better services and changes in the world of work are inextricably linked. At the moment, men's resistance to change is constantly reinforced by a whole series of very concrete factors.

Women's choice to work and the economy of the household

If women's lives are still structured fundamentally by the choice to have children, that choice today is made in the context of a desire for paid work. The lower birth rate is in part an attempt to limit the constraints on women participating in the paid labour force. This demand for work exists *despite* the difficulties thrown up by the lack of services and a male model of work. The choice to seek paid work is made in the context of what I will call the 'economy' of the household, defined not just in financial terms but with regard to all the resources at its command, time, energy, etc, compared to its needs, material, social, emotional, and so on. What factors, what costs and benefits are involved in the choice to seek paid work?

The first benefit from the point of view of both the individual woman and the household is economic. Women today contribute substantially to the economic resources of households, to their material standard of living. Four times as many households would be below the official poverty line if the wife did not work.[6] Now if we extend the concept of poverty to having such limited resources as to be effectively cut off from normal social activities, and we think of the many millions of people who are above that line but whose disposable income is more or less spoken for by fundamental necessities, we will arrive at an enormous number of households in which the *woman's* wage is crucial.

At the same time, if women decide to go out to work and are encouraged to do so for

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economic reasons, getting a job brings other benefits besides financial ones, such as self-esteem, pride, confidence, a feeling of achievement. Being in paid labour also structures to some extent their domestic lives. A wide range of relationships and activities outside the home which are legitimised socially and domestically because they are linked with a wage to some extent limit the demands that can be put on women by children, husbands, parents and institutions like schools. If men are beginning, however, slowly, grudgingly or nobly to undertake some domestic responsibilities, it is in large part due to women not being able to do everything they did before — even if the solution is fetching a take-away curry. There is a limit even to the double shift.

Yet, although being in the workforce gives some independence, overcomes the isolation felt by women at home, and from a social point of view, provides the premise for trade union activities and a greater social and political awareness, there are also costs. For women who work, the vast majority of whom have domestic responsibilities (or for men who work and undertake substantial domestic tasks) little time or energy is left for leisure let alone trade union or political activities.

Moreover, the economic factor itself is very complicated. One of the main reasons that women go out to work is that in a low wage economy in which the purchasing power of the average British male wage is one of the lowest in the EEC, men's take-home pay decreasingly covers the needs of households. Low wages reinforce the defence of overtime by individuals and by trade unions and therefore undercut the demand for the shortening of working hours. Yet if low wages constitute an obstacle to eliminating overtime and reducing the working week, they are also a factor in encouraging women to seek work and part of a complicated picture from the point of view of the economy of the household. A certain standard of living is only achieved because the income of a large number of households includes a woman's wages. But we must also consider the *non-financial* needs and desires of a household. These include everything from childcare, to shopping and cooking, to household repairs, to leisure activities. If we do this, we arrive at a picture of a huge expenditure of time and energy to achieve a certain standard of living plus take care of household needs. The costs include women's double shift, young people not kept in education, giving up other activities, etc.

Of course the relationship of men to this bundle of household needs is very different from women. To state the obvious, they have a discontinuous and unequal relation to the domestic. Although the specific weight of their economic contribution to the household is less than it used to be, their role is not 'also' economic but predominantly economic. Although women's wages are crucial, the difference between men and women in a situation where the male wage still usually provides the greater part of the financial resources at the disposal of the households is that although men in most households depend for a certain standard of living on a woman's income their lives are not structured by this element of dependence or by domestic demands. We have to think anew, then, about the structure and texture of the *interdependence* between men and women within which men dominate.

The fact that men fulfil domestic needs more in terms of money resources than time or physical or emotional energy has various consequences. An important one is to give credence to the notion that a man should earn enough to support a family, the so-called 'family wage' which can be an element in male wage bargaining and often influences women's view of their own labour, ie, the idea that men 'deserve' to earn more. The real situation of most households has moved beyond the family wage,[7] and yet

[5] Jean Coussins and Anna Coote, *The Family on the Firing Line*. NCCL/CPAG London 1981.
[6] Central Policy Review Staff, *People and their Families*, 1979.

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the idea continues to have real effects. It is bolstered as well by the fact that a politically significant minority of households correspond to the family wage model: a couple with two small children where, given the lack of services combined with prospects of low pay, the woman cannot reasonably undertake paid work even if she would like to. If this applies to only 15% of all households, a very large slice of the population goes through this experience, and they tend to be amongst those in greatest poverty. 40% of families where the youngest child is under five live near or below the official poverty line.[8] This is connected directly to the relatively low percentage of women who work before all the children are at school. The poverty trap is in part created by the lack of good childcare facilities.

the world of work has never been organised in the modern period around people's domestic needs

The feminist attack on the family wage, while insisting that it in no way corresponds to the reality of most households, must be part of a fight for better services, for changes in the model of work to allow more women to seek employment and for a system of social payments to ensure that households with small children are not forced into poverty. Women could then make a much freer choice whether to stay at home when their children are young, and men could rely less on overtime. We would begin to create some of the conditions necessary to undermine the traditional division of labour between men and women, particularly in the domestic sphere so that women do not simply assume the increased burden of a double shift.

Women's dual role and the welfare state

If we turn from individual choices about the domestic and productive realms to consider the role of the state, we arrive once more at the inevitable fact that the role of women is not simply a side issue but concerns the precise delineation of the web of relationships, public, private, state, economic, social in Britain today. One of the parameters of the field of freedom within which women make choices about children and work, affecting the content of services to be provided within the household and changes in family roles, is constituted by the services provided by the welfare state. If we consider that at any one moment in time an array of services is required to provide for the needs of individuals, family-household units, and society as a whole, we can begin to investigate how public and private spheres are organised and what the relationship is between them.

From a social point of view, a fundamental aspect of the welfare state, is the assumption that the family/woman will provide fundamental services. The welfare state will only provide what cannot be provided elsewhere. The less the welfare state does, the more is done by women and *vice versa*. In this sense the attitude that women in need cannot 'cope' or are in some way inadequate is an extension of an attitude on which the welfare state is founded. This relates to the further assumption that a woman's role is flexible, that her participation in the labour force is marginal. The costs to her and to the household in which she lives of dropping out of the labour market in order, say, to take care of a disabled relative remain invisible and unspoken.

To the extent that the welfare state is based on what I have been calling the male model of work and the sexual division of labour implicit within it, the welfare state 'reflects' and helps to reproduce a particular *form* of capitalist society. Yet as I have been arguing, this form has entered into a long-term crisis because the lives of women are changing. To begin to investigate the role of the welfare state and its relationship to these developments, we have, first of all, to define it rather more broadly than usual. The cornerstone of the social pact on which the welfare state was founded was full male employment. The other feature of the welfare state was the provision of social services which were based on a male model of work. The welfare state has, however, produced the seeds of its own crisis. Its development while depending on services in the home, on women's domestic role, has provided for her *dual role*.

The imbalance within women's dual role, the proportion of effort directed at the domestic and the way this structures women's lives, can be seen in large part as an effect of the partial way in which the state provides services which is a constraint on more women seeking full-time jobs. Yet, to the extent that services exist, the choice to work is facilitated. Furthermore, given the increased financial need and the desire of women to work, their influx into the labour force has been related in large part to the expansion of the state sector. The welfare state depends on the cheap labour of women, many of them living in poverty and/or whose financial needs are to some extent taken care of in a household with other income(s).

A real and potential source of tension between society and the state is precisely that it is assumed that women can step in to fill gaps or supply services even when they cannot or when so doing incurs very concrete costs. To give just one example, when a school closes because of half-term or because it is used as a polling station, the assumption is that there is a woman with a flexible schedule who can step into the breach. Yet the statistics about women in the workforce warn us that neither mum nor auntie nor grandma nor friend next door is likely to be free or at least only at considerable cost.

From the point of view of the school, a working mother is a problem. From her point of view it is the organisation of the school which is the problem. If a woman gives up a job to care for an elderly relative, or looks after her mother on top of everything else she must do, the cost to her and to her household is considerable. But if she doesn't the cost to the state increases commensurately. If a woman is made unemployed, there are economic and personal costs to her, and if she registers, financial costs to the state.

As consumers of state services or suppliers of services which do not exist elsewhere, women mediate constantly between the domestic and state spheres. They are usually the concrete link between domestic needs and state services. More often than not they are the ones who step into the breach: they take the children to school or the clinic, they confront the health visitor or social worker or go along to try to get a rent rebate. Although there is no questioning the isolating, privatising effects of the domestic sphere, it is inevitably and inextricably enmeshed with public and in that sense political relations.

Some conclusions

The need and desire of women to combine a domestic role including children with an almost continuous role in the paid labour force is a disruptive factor in British society. Neither the organisation of the domestic sphere, the form of paid work, nor the welfare state have changed to take account of this fundamental social change. Despite the tensions and contradictions caused by the lack of 'fit' between traditional institutions and women's new role, the outcome is unclear. It is certainly not inevitable that these institutions will be transformed to meet the new situation.

What are the implications of these contradictions for feminists, for the Left and for society? The first concerns the question of reforms. The way the domestic sphere, the world of work, and the state are inter-related dictates a battle on all fronts, a war of position in Gramsci's terms, a *strategy* of

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reforms. This goes beyond the concept of 'priorities' which implies the possibility of ranking different demands in a long list. We cannot appreciate the effectiveness of a single reform, like socialised childcare, without being forced to see it in relation to a series of fundamental changes which are structural and revolutionary. An alternative social and economic strategy must itself derive from a vision of the new kind of social life which people are already in fact trying to create.

This raises important questions about the welfare state. For example, the possibility of uniform and centralised provision to satisfy social needs is challenged by the experience of millions of women. Instead of relegating a problem automatically to the state, we are compelled to decide when it is more appropriate to ask the political sphere to enhance our social creativity, and thus our freedom, to help us to help each other.

The building blocks of a coherent strategy and a new vision of society are adequate provision for children and a transformation of the world of work. This means that the trade unions are also confronted by qualitatively new tasks. The world of work has never been organised in the modern period around people's domestic needs. The form of full-time work has remained unchanged since major advances were made in reducing the working day. The trade unions have fought to protect people at work, but they have shared society's assumption that people should adjust their lives to the job and not the other way round. In general the Left has looked to the state where individual arrangements fail. Yet, a change in the organisation of work is not simply a utopian idea unrelated to changes and debates going on in society as a whole. The need to find jobs for the 4 million or more unemployed, so many of whom are women and young people with quite different demands of life and work than earlier generations, is already the basis of widespread discussion of the need to re-define work. A campaign to adjust work to take account of the domestic needs of both women and men and provide jobs for millions of people who are unemployed could be joined with the struggle for higher wages to capture the imagination of millions of people, of women and young people, of parents desperately worried about the future of their children. The spirit of idealism and sacrifice harnessed by the health workers' fight (and in a negative direction by the Falklands war) is evidence of a deep desire to go beyond the downward spiral of everyday life.

Women's new role should also provide a new perspective for feminists and the Left in general in the debate on the family. Although there is no evidence that the family in its different forms is disappearing, neither it nor the relations within it are static. For example, the economic role of men is being undermined or acquiring a different relative weight while a new role for women is being constituted. In order to undercut the oppressive effects of an ideology based on a certain model of the family, we have to consider the real problems people face in escaping this oppression in order to think about what kinds of demands can be made to maximise the possibility of creating new types of human relations, of constructing material conditions or premises for such a change, of removing the excuses used by men not to give up their privileges. We must consider, in other words, the realm of freedom we inhabit and people's creativity in expanding that freedom as well as the boundaries to that freedom. Women's liberation will only become a possibility if it is rooted in concrete changes.

Because neither the domestic sphere nor the world of work nor the welfare state 'fit' the changed world of women, there is a *potential* basis of mass consent for a fundamental change. Yet for the most part the social and political system succeeds in simply 'absorbing' the contradictions I've discussed —people and institutions just 'cope'. To the extent that women are forced simply to do more and to accept a double shift, they and to a lesser degree their families absorb the costs of their new role leaving institutions and the male role intact. Without an improvement in the quality of women's lives, these changes could simply provide the basis for a reaction against the women's movement and nostalgia for an idealised past. If because of the need for women to earn wages there is no widespread support for excluding women from work,[9] a new system of passive social consent is developing around what benefits people manage to obtain from institutions as they are, within the new version of the sexual division of labour in which women have two jobs.

The establishment of a new perspective can only develop on the basis of recognising that people are not mere dupes but are both active agents of obtaining what satisfaction they can within present arrangements and fight to expand their freedom of action. Women are forced to struggle by the contradictory situation of their lives. The creativity, the ingenuity, and enormous talent and energy of millions of women who juggle their many roles with such great agility can serve as an inspiration for the women's movement and the Left as a whole as we fight to create the conditions to alleviate the burdens they bear and to eliminate men's excuses not to change. □

[7] For example, only 5% of the 'economically active' population are men with a wife who doesn't work and two dependent children. General Household Survey 1979.

[8] Sarah Curtis, 'Who Really Loves the Family', *The Times*, 23 June 1982.

[9] Ian Hargreaves, 'Women and Immigrants — a Blurred Picture,' *The Financial Times* 30 June 1982.

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Gerry Pocock

The End of a Dream?

The introduction of martial law in Poland last December was an attempt to find a way out of an impasse that was threatening to paralyse the economy and even government of the country. Faced with a choice between a further development of the renewal and democratisation process unleashed in July 1980 and a resort to an authoritarian solution that curbed the mass movement, the Polish authorities chose the second.

They were aided in that choice by the ever-present possibility of Soviet intervention, though the idea that martial law was forced on General Jaruzelski by that threat or by sudden deterioration in the situation is not convincing. Martial law was well planned, well executed and the evidence suggests well premeditated, starting with Jaruzelski's election as first secretary in October and including the widespread use of the army last autumn as a 'neutral' stabilising force to ensure food distribution. The view that this was a last desperate remedy by a 'reformist' anxious to save the renewal movement from both the excesses of 'Solidarity extremists' and the intransigence of PUWP conservatives does not square with what has happened since.

The recourse to martial law and government by the Martial Council of National Salvation marked a rejection of the mass movement that mobilised over a period of many months millions of workers. This movement brushed aside the previous trade union structure and established its own — Solidarity — with 9½ million members.

It forced the resignation of the secretary of the Party, Edward Gierek, and several other changes in Party, state and government leadership. It exposed the corruption and mismanagement that were rife, and questioned the institutionalised 'leading role' of the Party in a more forthright, far-reaching and determined way than had ever happened before.

This life-giving process touched the PUWP membership, an increasing proportion of which, after a hesitant beginning, threw itself into the renewal process. Over a million Communists joined Solidarity, the renewal movement in the Party gathered strength and confidence, reaching its peak in the run-up to and preparation for the Extraordinary Congress in July 1981.

This inner-Party development was paralleled by a converging of the conservative forces whose views were expressed, for example, in the Katowice Forum. This section favoured a more orthodox and, in the circumstances, more authoritarian solution. Their assessment was echoed in the letter sent to the PUWP Central Committee by the Soviet Communist Party in June 1981. This letter probably marked the beginning of the end of the renewal process. In the event, it was brought to a halt in December 1981 with the martial law proclamation, and the Party was pushed to one side.

Effects of martial law

What has happened since has effectively brought to an end the biggest and most sustained working class movement of recent times in Europe. The balance of forces inside the country has shifted dramatically, a

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stark symbol of this change being the introduction of price increases on foodstuffs. It was such increases and their arbitrary introduction that had sparked off previous revolts. However justified economically and though accompanied by increased allowances to the lower paid, these increases demonstrated how much had been changed by martial law. Another related example was the contrast between the way the Sejm deputies (an overwhelming majority of whom were communists) refused to adopt an anti-strike Bill prior to martial law and their acceptance of a *fait accompli* when the Sejm eventually met under martial law.

Changes since martial law have also served to shift the focus of permitted criticism: it is now fair game to attack the Gierek decade as the era of irresponsible reliance on Western credits and over-ambitious schemes. Pushed into the background is that criticism and analysis that started in 1981 to look for the deeper reasons for socialist Poland's recurrent crises and deviations from socialist principles that, as the 9th Congress in July 1981 put it, 'began with a turn made in the policy of the Polish Workers' Party in 1948, and were deepened in 1949.'

The destruction of the mass movement, the stifling of renewal, have been accompanied by a distorted picture of the 1980/81 period in order to legitimise martial law. Headstrong, extremist-led Solidarity is portrayed as the main cause of the problems, responding to every concession from a well meaning (but probably too weak) government by even more outrageous demands.

In October, the new trade union law provided the occasion for finally banishing Solidarity. In choosing the option they did, the martial law authorities chose the most restrictive of the possible courses open to them. After months of consideration, leaks and speculation, Solidarity was made illegal along with the other trade unions. The new law prescribes the construction of new unions, including the right to strike in certain circumstances, secret ballots for elections, compulsory arbitration — all, for the time being, at workplace level.

While considerable relaxation of the first highly restrictive martial law regulations has taken place, these relaxations have not touched the essence of the new regime installed last December. It is opposed to the development of any autonomous mass movement, it is authoritarian and intolerant of criticism. Opposition and protest is categorised as counter-revolutionary or the work of foreign intelligence. And it has pursued a repressive approach towards displays of opposition or protest. Up until now, some 15 people have been killed in demonstrations though there have been no reports of offical inquiries into these (another repeat of past insensitiveness).

Meanwhile, the Military Council has in effect adopted a self-justifying yardstick by which to measure the stability which it says will enable an end to martial law: it is the attitude to martial law that will be the determining factor. In other words, every strike, every demonstration, is the justification for a further postponement of a return to civilian rule.

Is it working?

Is martial law succeeding? By its own public terms of reference as stated in the original proclamation, it is not. The notion of a relatively short spell of martial law with the temporary suspension of Solidarity and other mass bodies has not proved accurate. But as far as the economy is concerned, the picture is mixed. The Reagan-inspired sanctions obviously have an impact. Shortages of parts, the time taken for reforms to be implemented and take effect have to be taken into account. But there is evidence of some improvement.

opposition and protest is categorised as counter-revolutionary or the work of foreign intelligence

The situation of the Party has been changed. It was the failure of the Party that was a big contribution to the crisis in the first place. Developments inside the Party gave some reason to believe that if allowed its head, the Party renewal movement would eventually completely transform it into a force that could recapture popular mass support though without ever returning to (or wanting to return to) exclusive dominance. Martial law ended that and for the first time in a socialist state the Party has taken second place to the military. Moreover, the Party itself is being changed. Many have left its ranks — voluntarily or by expulsion. And democratic discussion has been severely curtailed.

Most difficult to assess is the mood of the people. Undoubtedly for many the most important desire is for some stability in their lives. Many of the demonstrations have been of a markedly religious nature and the Church has become once more the medium for the expression of popular feeling. The Church, however, seems to have had little success in mediating with the authorities, nor has it had a clear and consistent line on how to react to martial law.

That could also be said to be true of Solidarity, crippled as it was by the martial law ban and the internment of some of its most experienced officials. Solidarity never was an homogeneous movement. This was not simply because it was a mixture of elements including some hostile to socialism as such, but also because of the way it grew up and the circumstances in which it spent its short period of legal existence. In conditions of illegality this is a major weakness.

It is impossible to say what will happen to Solidarity, though it is improbable that it will ever again appear legally in pre-December form. It emerged in a particular set of circumstances that cannot recur. But it will certainly continue to exist as a symbol of opposition and a framework for clandestine activities.

Despite the severity of repression, the willingness of many Polish workers to engage in stubborn acts of defiance — without being prepared to follow every Solidarity call — has been a distinctive feature of the last 12 months. The first reactions to the ban on Solidarity were strikes in the Gdansk shipyards and elsewhere, and these strikes seem to have been spontaneous actions that were not called by Solidarity leaders. Moreover, first reports indicate a very slow response to the invitation to form preparatory committees for the new 'independent and legal' workplace unions, though whether Solidarity's boycott call will be followed is impossible to assess at this moment.

Prospects

The immediate prospect is not a hopeful one. From the outset the distinctive features of the 1980 revolt compared to 1956 and 1970 were that it was more prolonged, more organised, created structures, made more far-reaching challenges to political practices and was not prepared to accept sops or promises. It led too, to a renewal movement inside the Party itself.

None of these characteristics is going to disappear, nor will they be easily crushed. There is now a permanent self-conscious and aware opposition that will manifest itself one way or another. Nor is the reality of Polish society going to disappear. All that was said over the last two years about the need for dialogue and agreement between the great forces of Polish society — the Church, the Party and what Solidarity represented — remains true. As far as we are concerned in the West, the most favourable conditions for encouraging such a development would be a return to detente in general and an end to the policy of sanctions in particular. □

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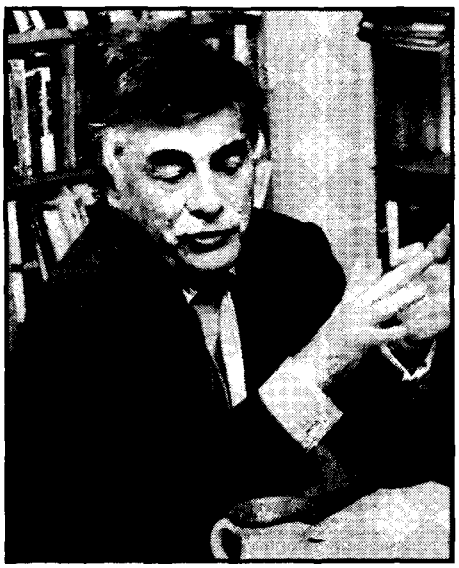

PETER JENKINS

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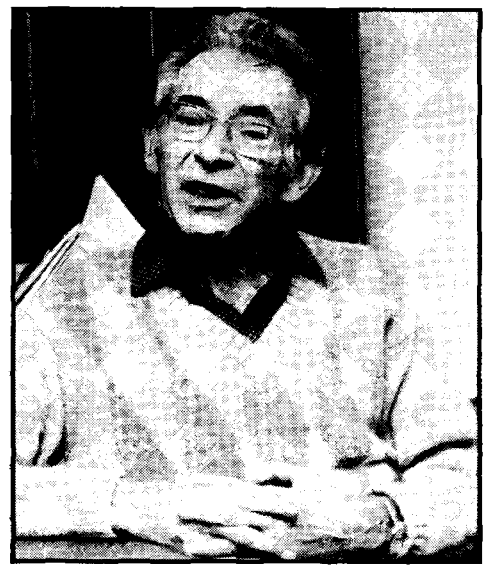

SAM AARONOVITCH

Redrawing the Political Map

To what extent has Thatcher changed the face of British politics?

Stuart Hall She has changed it in the sense that the intervention from the radical right has either broken up or put into question the set of political reference points that have been in place throughout more or less the whole of the postwar period. That doesn't mean that they have disintegrated, or gone for good, but it does mean that a whole range of things which people have taken for granted as always being there in the political background are up for debate. Although there were disagreements between Right and Left throughout the postwar period, there was also a political settlement arrived at from the 40s in which people agreed a framework within which politics would move. Now that framework is breaking up and there is an attempt to set a different political map. I don't know if that means that the particular political forces which have emerged in this phase will last in their present exact form.

Sam Aaronovitch I was trying to work out an image that would correspond to what I think is happening. The kind of image I've conjured up is that the political situation has shifted on its axis and to some degree also shifted its tilt. The face of it may be much less changed than perhaps one sometimes imagines, but it certainly has changed. It is not just Thatcherism, though, but also the impact of the economic crisis. So I think it's worth not just taking Thatcherism on its own terms but also locating it in the world economic crisis, which very often we don't do.

Peter Jenkins I agree with a lot of what Stuart has said because it seems to me that she has broken the terms of the postwar settlement. Heath had a try at doing so in 1970-72 and then went in the other direction. She has gone through with the attempt and I think that whether it leaves a permanent effect or not, she will have demonstrated that some of the sacred cows weren't so sacred. Just to give, perhaps the most obvious example, she has brought the unemployment level up to what according to the conventional wisdom of a decade ago would have been a socially intolerable level, but it's proved tolerable in the sense that society has tolerated it. Now, once you do something like that, of course, it is open to do it again and in that sense I think she will leave some permanent mark. In another sense I think it's too early to say, because if one is talking about changing the face of British politics, one has to look for the emergence of some new coalition which is capable of winning and holding power.

Now when this kind of sea change occurs in a democracy, or where it has happened before in British history, it has been associated with one of two developments, either new voters coming onto the market as a result of the extension of the franchise or with the appearance of some over-riding issue which has split the parties and helped to bring about a realignment. Now in the first category, there is the rise of the Labour Party consequent upon the extension of the franchise in the second and third Reform Bills and in the second category, the split of the Liberal Party over the Irish question, for example.

Now it's unclear to me what question of that kind is at issue in British politics today or whether one has in any precise, sociological sense a new class or element or interest in the land on which Thatcherism is based. You could argue that her electoral base in 1979 was a particularly flimsy one in that the Conservative Party did unprecedentedly badly in the great cities of the north. It looked like a very suburban power base which she had achieved for herself and something which really might be quite temporary coming as it did after a period of very high inflation, unsuccessful Labour government and in the wake of the 'winter of discontent'. But now perhaps, it does begin to look a little more permanent, but perhaps not yet permanent enough for us to classify it as a major structural change in British politics.

SA I feel a certain caution in what you might call dramatic inter-

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pretations. It does seem to me that one might draw an analogy between the Thatcherite enterprise and the Wilson enterprise of 1964. They're both in their different ways modernising strategies, and both probably destined for defeat.

What one certainly does notice, is that there's been a major shift in people's expectations. Expectations have been degraded. There's been a big blow to the self-confidence of large sections of people, particularly workers. Here the economic crisis has had a profound effect. It is bringing out all the traditional reflexes in the country and particularly in the labour movement. Everybody's holding on — if they can — to what they've got. They're fighting over what bits are available to them and the psychology of this helps Thatcherism to continue and roll forward. In this situation, the trade unions have tended to become exposed and partially isolated. Maybe there are similarities between now and the period after the general strike.

Many thought that unemployment would act as a great overriding issue. But clearly it has not done so, and I suppose one of the reasons is that (and it's unpalatable to say so) an awful lot of people have not suffered a severe deterioration in the period of the Tory government and there are elements who have done quite well. There's an economic basis of support for the existing situation which the Left does not like to acknowledge.

SH In the absence of a major issue of the kind Peter described, and I don't think there is one, the changes are not so dramatic. They seem to me to have much more to do with the erosion of particular formations over a long period of time. For instance, take the question of the nature of her support in 1979; obviously it's not attributable to the emergence of a new social force on the electoral horizon for the first time. On the other hand I suppose we ought to spend some time asking exactly whether it was just a fortuitous coming together of different constituencies which will next time disappear back into their traditional corners or whether there is some new element in it. Is there something about the nature of the people who voted for the radical right for the first time in 1979 who had never been either traditional Conservative supporters or the deference working class vote, which constitutes them as a new social force with any sort of continuity? Or are they simply the rump of people against social contracting or for lower taxes, are they simply the residium of a number of different constituencies who will never stick together? Because I think that without some change in the composition of the political constituencies in that way then she obviously has a lot of immediate appeal, but you wouldn't say that Thatcherism is a real break in the structure of politics.

Now Sam, when you say 'modernising strategy', I'm not sure about that. If I think about the sort of support the Thatcher programme would have in industry, I still fail to see how any serious industrialist could be persuaded for any length of time that that programme could bring about economic modernisation in any long term structural sense. Therefore I think its value, its project, is very political — in a very narrow way. Its project is to fracture what exists, to shift the balance of forces. Then some longer term, more moderate political force might come in and produce longer term solutions but on political terrain much more favourable to capital, which has the unions very isolated, the shop stewards' movement undermined, and the unions boxed in by legal restraints.

PJ Let me come back and see whether we can't be a bit more specific about the ingredients of what we loosely call Thatcherism or this coalition which came into power in May 1979 and which, perhaps we should recall in passing at least, had shown every sign of having collapsed a year ago when the Alliance was riding high in the opinion polls. Indeed, if we'd been having this discussion a year ago, I think we would have been very loath to have regarded her coalition as anything permanent.

First, it seems to me that she is explicitly anti-socialist, in a way in which no Conservative politician has really been since perhaps Churchill, in one of his phases in the middle period of the Attlee government. So one has to at least pose the question as to whether anti-socialism has something to do with her appeal to the working class and is, maybe, one of the pillars of a new coalition. The second ingredient is the patriotic one. Now she's sort of half a Chamberlain, isn't she? She's got the patriotic bit and she's got the popular, or as people say these days, populist bit. She's got that aspect but not the paternal nor, as yet, the protectionist side of Chamberlain, although that may conceivably come. But we at least have to begin to revise our view of her being an ideologically rigid 19th century Liberal, and start to consider the possibilities of this patriot and popular politician feeling herself less bound by ideology.

Now the third element concerns the skilled workers and trade union members who swung above the average national swing to her support in 1979. It may be that these groups are, or were then, behaving in a way which went beyond the normal kind of backlash in politics. It may be that perhaps these people are beginning to define their interests apart from the labour movement as presently organised. Possibly — and I am being very tentative about this — one is

> Its project is to fracture what exists, to shift the balance of forces

seeing a shift of an interest group traditionally very much a part of the labour movement which is breaking loose from it and is going to be up for grabs in British politics, and she was the first person to grab at it.

SH I'm not sure why Peter, you thought, as a result of looking at the elements of Thatcherism, that she might be less rather than more ideological than we thought. I would have given more weight than you did to the neo-liberal elements — choice, freedom, competitive individualism, self-reliance etc. I think those are linked to the anti-socialist theme.

PJ I agree. I must make it more clear what I mean about the neo-liberal element. It's beyond doubt that hitherto this had been the dominant feature of the politics we call Thatcherism. That is what she is, she is a neo-liberal. I just threw out the possibility that she may shift away from that and become something more in the mould of Chamberlain. She may see the possibilities of cementing a more permanent coalition out of something which has been temporarily constructed around certain economic grievances and the unpopularity of the government of the day. I don't think she's going to achieve that on a neo-liberal programme. So maybe we will now see her trying to cement that coalition by shifting somewhat away from her neo-liberalism in a more patriotic direction.

SH Well I'm not sure that neo-liberalism can't work. You see I think one of the reasons why we think it can't is because we're part of the socialist illusion that she's trying to destroy. We've accepted over a long period of time that our kind of economy can't possibly work without very substantial state involvement. Now one of the really remarkable things that she's done is to say it's possible to articulate advanced capitalism to a political programme, to a combination of industry and state, which is radically different from what I think all of us have assumed before is essential. That's why the American comparison is so important, because in all our thinking about state capitalism, we always forget that the American state-

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capital combination is very different from social democratic corporatism. She made that live over here — if they can do it over there, why not here? It's not true that her political ideology is quite so opportunist. It may not be viable, but I think she does believe that you can combine corporate capitalism and competitive individualism.

Given the impact of Thatcherism, what about the emergence of the Alliance, what does that mean? Is it simply a short term response to Thatcherism or does it reflect deeper changes?

PJ In an immediate sense the emergence of the Alliance is a function of the crisis of the Labour Party, rather than of the phenomenon we are calling Thatcherism. But I suppose one could argue that Thatcherism was one of the factors contributing to the polarisation of the two-party system and the leftward tendency in the Labour Party. Her accession to the leadership of the Conservative Party, in that case, would be one of the events which contributed to the eventual split of the Labour Party, the formation of the SDP and the emergence of the Alliance. But that doesn't really say very much about it.

I begin with what does seem to me to be the central factor involved here which is the crisis of the Labour Party. The centre has little real life of its own: the success of any third force in British politics must depend primarily on the failure of one or other,or perhaps both, of the parties of the two-party system. So the emergence of the Alliance in the first instance is a symptom not the cause of a political realignment. And if that realignment is taking place, it is because of the crisis in the Labour Party and the labour movement. That would be the starting point of my analysis.

What is the nature of the debate between Jenkins and Owen? They seem to be differing about who it is the SDP should appeal to, who their electorate is likely to be.

SH I accept what you say, including the fact that it's the radical presence of Thatcherism on the scene that in a sense prevented the Labour Party from making its more normal accommodations. But until one says what the nature of the crisis of the Labour Party is, and assesses its depth, it's quite difficult to make an assessment of what the SDP is. What is the crisis that made the Social Democrats within the Labour Party decide that there was more for them outside than inside the Labour Party. After all we've had powerful right wing elements in the Labour Party for a very long time including people who always subscribed to a very SDP type position. But there was always so much to be gained for them out of the old connections with the class and above all with the trade unions that they never thought of going, they thought the Left should go. Indeed, they depended on a close relationship with the right wing of the trade union movement for their political base. So what was it that snapped, which made that connection a constraint rather than a lifeline which they continue to need and will make sacrifices for.

Now that question is very much linked to the impact of Thatcherism because one of its effects has been to sectionalise off the trade unions, to make them look like a sectional interest rather than the majority class, and therefore a less attractive political ally.

SA I have a somewhat different view. That section of the Labour Right which is in the traditional frame of the labour movement is not splitting and probably will not split away. In fact they have launched a massive counter-offensive to make sure that their power base is retained within the labour and trade union movement. It seems to me that, at least in the run-up to the general election, those forces are cementing themselves into the Labour Party and are not in anyway inclined to desert it. Of course, if the Tories win the next election, that may change. So some strata have left, but many haven't.

PJ But Sam, let me say something, speaking as an out and out reformist, in the presence of you socialists and Marxists. Stuart asks what snapped, well I think what snapped was that a number of people came to the conclusion that the broad church of the labour movement was no longer a viable vehicle for what came to be called 'social democracy'. This element in the Labour Party, all through the 60s and still, although by now against the odds, in the 70s, saw the best prospect for the Labour Party as an out-and-out and explicitly reformist, you might say non-socialist, party along the lines of the German SPD. That was what they wanted to see.

Now from sometime in the early 70s, partly because of the split in the Labour Party over the Common Market, the thing started to go quite sharply in the opposite direction. The people who led the breakaway had come to believe in 1980 that it would not be possible to retrieve the situation unless, say, two out of three conditions were met. One was that the so-called democratisation surge was resisted and the leadership remained the prerogative of the parliamentary party or was decided on a one-person, one-vote basis. Secondly, certain policies that were unacceptable to these people — notably withdrawal from the Common Market, unilateral nuclear disarmament and the alternative economic strategy — had to be reversed. Thirdly there was the leadership itself. Once Foot became leader, I think this was the clincher and they realised that under his leadership the battle was lost and so they got out.

SA I would like to shift the ground somewhat. What is the nature of the debate between Jenkins and Owen? They seem to be differing about who it is the SDP should appeal to, who their electorate is likely to be. What's come into the picture is not simply what is one's view about British politics, but who should one appeal to in order to get a base. Now my feeling is that the centre as such does not really exist in any definable form. If the SDP tries to construct a programme based on a concept of a moderate centre, I would be very doubtful if it had a future. Because it is likely to end up with no policy at all, the dangers of that are quite real. I suspect therefore that the Alliance is probably going to play a frustrating and maybe even a paralysing role in British politics. As I see it, the crisis requires radical measures which the Alliance is not prepared to go for and has in fact turned its back on. The problem of British politics is basically the enormous contradiction between the nature of those solutions which I think are required and the state of opinion which I don't think can be easily defined.

SH I would like to explore the question of the SDP and the Labour Right a bit more. Now and again I hear a voice which is reformist in very similar ways to the SDP but which on the other hand is also clearly still linked in some way to the labour movement, for example Hattersley. Hattersley is a very interesting person because he would probably make exactly the same criticisms of many of the old shibboleths of the labour movement as SDP people would, but something still links him into that. One of the things that distinguishes the people who decided to leave is not their reformism, because I think they share their reformism with many who are in the Labour Party. Rather it is the class connection which separates them. Those who left believe it isn't pertinent anymore, it is possible to move away from that definition of politics. It is in that context that

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the unions, though not necessarily standing for anything but a reformist type of politics, nevertheless constitute a link with class questions and relationships. And the reformists reject this, they think politics is no longer about this.

PJ Well that's the important question. The reason why I said that the future of the SDP was bound up almost entirely with the prospects for the Labour Party was exactly that.

But let's come back to the Labour Party. You would seem to have a secular decline. Here is a party, based on the idea of the advance of the working class, which has done worse at each general election, with the exception of 1966, since 1951, and declined to its worst performance since 1931 at the last general election. Its membership has declined disastrously, though all parties have suffered in this respect. The correlation between class and voting is in decline. The Labour Party suffers from demographic developments; as people move out of inner cities into suburbs and into the countryside. It is being progressively reduced to old fashioned urban strongholds around declining industries. Now I say none of these things with delight but it would seem to me that the prospects for the Labour Party do not look good.

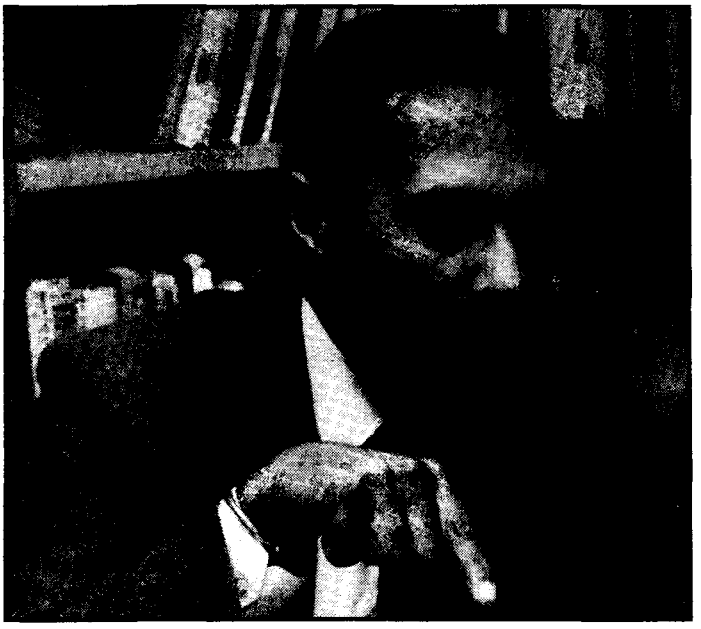
SA But I'd like to know a little bit more, Peter, about who you think the Alliance is actually appealing to? I think the forces associated with the Alliance are very significant and I don't want to give the impression of any kind of sectarian view about them. I also think the nature of Thatcherism is such that I'm prepared to construct an alliance with all kinds of forces who are prepared to challenge what Thatcherism is about, and I don't care in a sense what party they're in. But there's got to be some sort of central thrust that's taking the thing forward in some way, it's got to be around something, so what's the Alliance appealing to?

PJ I think the first positive thing one has to say is that if the Labour Party ceases to be an effective vehicle for the politics of the reformist Left and if people with grievances and aspirations want to look somewhere else, then a new politics is going to form. It is not part of my analysis to say that the SDP, least of all the Liberal Party, are history's vehicles for this great transformation, they just happen to be there at the moment. My case is that I suspect something of this kind is happening, or is going to happen, because I have a feeling that the socialist era is coming to an end.

SH I think there have been two strands in what you've been saying, Peter, one about the Labour Party as an effective force, and the second about a change in what politics is about. Both of these have been around in the SDP break, but we have to look at them separately.

SA Can I just intervene here, Stuart. One myth is that the trade union movement itself has been the bastion of anti-democratic practices, this is what people like Shirley Williams and David Owen were objecting to. But surely one of the things that was worrying them was that the trade union base for right wing practices was cracking, and if that cracked then of course they could see the end of right dominance within the Labour Party. The shift in the unions represented a very fundamental change.

SH I agree with you, that's why I think that the SDP was an opportunist force, because they would have been less concerned about democratisation if the alliance between certain right wing leaders in the trade union movement and the centre-right in the party had held forever. That's a more cynical reading of the break.



But it doesn't undermine the question about whether socialism is ancient creed and class politics is finished.

PJ I think we should look at the centre from a longer term view. There's of course nothing new in this tendency. We have people throughout the postwar period, when invited by pollsters to express what they would like to see in an ideal world, who have shown support for the idea of coalition politics as opposed to class-bound party politics. There has been the phenomenon of periodic Liberal revolts, which has been a rising if cyclical tendency over the last 20 years or so. So there has been something there going on in the centre and the theory of the Alliance, which is purely tactical and opportunistic, is that it can enhance this Liberal tendency with a centrist tendency by giving it credibility with experienced politicians. Such a reinforcement of the centre could see the end of or at least important modifications in the two-party system.

SA We have a set of alliances within the Labour Party which has proved singularly unable to construct alliances, both within the Labour Party itself and between the Labour Party and other groups within society. So, with all the changes taking place in the composition of the working people and so on, the Labour Party as a structure has become progressively isolated from many of those changes which have taken place. The recomposition or reconstruction of the class is really quite a massive project which the Labour Party in general does not even begin to understand. And that has meant that all these long term tendencies operating in British politics have left it open for new forces to arise, not only the SDP but also for example the nationalist parties. But once a party like the SDP comes into existence and seeks an electoral base, then it is faced with defining its constituency, its appeal, its platform. That is very tricky.

PJ I do take the point that a party of no-fixed abode in British politics is unusual and vulnerable to temptations of all kinds. It is certainly true that the Liberal Party has tended to emphasise its leftishness when running in Labour seats and the other way when running in Conservative seats and again, maybe this is the fate of centre parties. So all these difficulties exist and I wouldn't deny it.

SA When one says no fixed abode, that really is an important point. It relates to your question of whether class politics has

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evaporated from the British scene or will do so. I happen to think that the class concept still has a lot to offer in terms of analysis, but it may be a different way of looking at class and class alliances which is actually involved.

But let me raise a different point, which focuses on the difference between the Alliance and Thatcherism. I think that the policies the Alliance is putting forward, though very inadequate, contain elements which would certainly be in advance of the situation we've got and, with a massive crisis, couldn't fail to bring about limited kinds of revival.

SH I think there are also gains in terms of what is not likely to be defended without at least strong, old liberal traditions. There are elements of Thatcherism which don't understand certain terms of the traditional liberal political lexicon. The fact that they don't know the difference between the rule of law and law and order is pretty important stuff. It means that we will be glad of the existence and purchase on the political scene of liberals who do understand that — in terms of civil rights issues, and particular policies.

The question is whether we are talking of a phenomenon of that kind or whether it represents in miniature as it were what the whole of the political scene is going to look like. I don't think that is so for a number of reasons. I don't think there will ever be that sort of straightforward relationship between class and party in Britain and there never has been. I don't think it's the end of socialism because the class and the party are not neatly aligned. We've never seen a phenomenon like that. I think it's also true that the hankering for the centre and coalitionism has been a very long part of the scene. It's partly a response to and product of democracy. It's also one of the responses to class politics that there should be parties and issues that cut across class so as to contain it.

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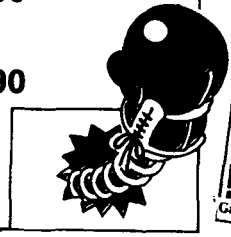

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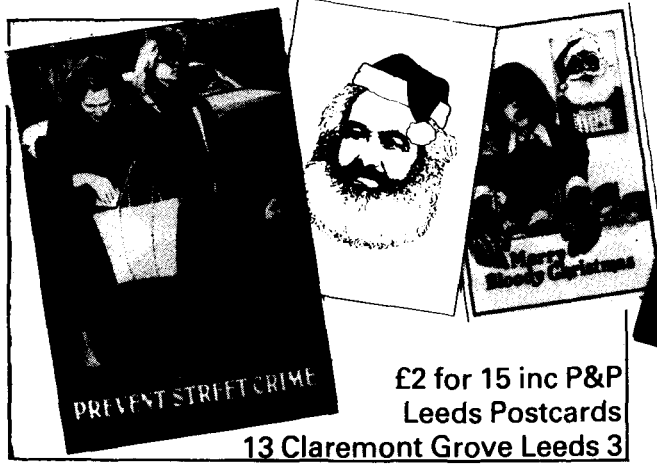

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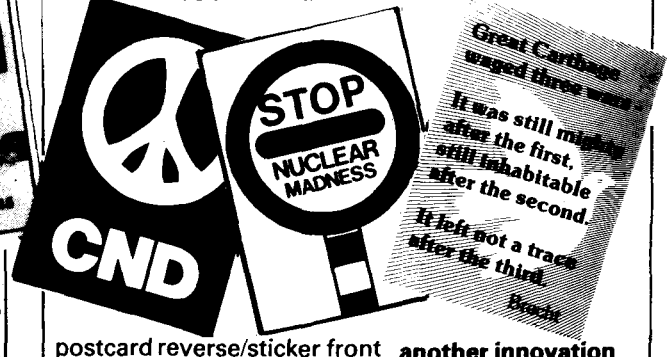

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SA I have to say that I don't see where the question of capital and labour has gone to. Of course they don't presume the whole political field, but when have they ever? Similarly, mass parties have never only been the expression of economic interests in their pure sense. The relation between class and non-class political issues and their party expression has always been pretty complex. It was never seen as class and socialism marching in a pure party form.

SH In my opinion, there are certain very fundamental things about the way in which different social struggles are married which are really unintelligible until you strike the foundations of class relations. Class is not all there is, but one needs it in order to understand ultimately what is driving the society in particular ways. But that doesn't mean the Labour Party understands anything about the modern forms which it has assumed and the relationship between class and non-class issues. That is exactly the kind of criticism I would want to make about the Labour Party. It is wedded to some other notion of how those things are structured which really belong to the past. That is what I think is archaic about it. In a sense, there is simply no mass political vehicle at the moment through which the new forms, the new problems can be expressed.

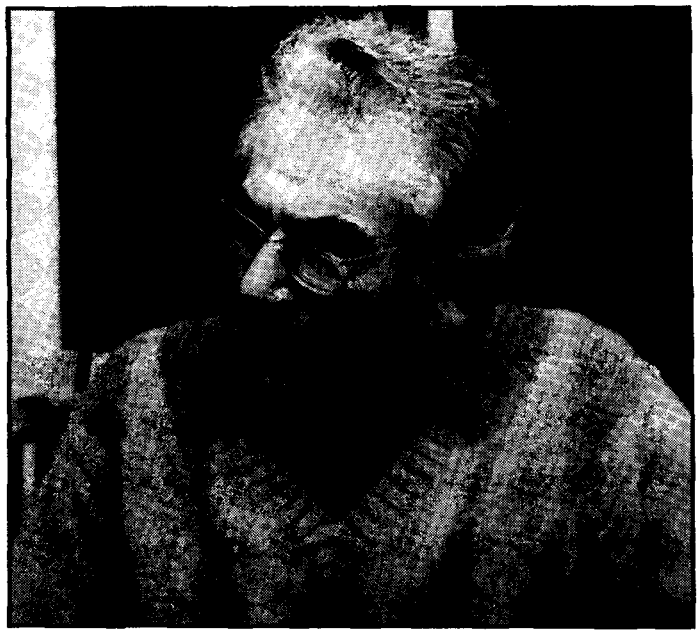
How then do you see the prospects for the Labour Party now?

SA But first let me say I do not define the Labour Party as a socialist party. This is a misunderstanding of what the Labour Party is, which is unfortunately shared by the contending forces within it. It is a party with socialist elements in it, but that is not the same thing as a socialist party. But each group within the Labour Party has an idealisation of what the party is they are in. On the one hand, it's a reformist party and that is what it should be, and on the other hand it's a socialist party and that's what it should be, without regard to the actual forces which had brought that party into being, which sustained it, and without regard even to what's needed for it to function as a very broad alliance. Incidentally, I happen to believe the Communist Party could be very useful in changing the Labour Party and the more general position of the labour movement. I regard the Labour Party as having the potential for being a very powerful grouping of forces which could constitute a magnetic force in British society, one capable of helping to build a broad set of alliances against Thatcherism. It seems to me that the Left within the Labour Party has had ideals but basically no strategy, except in terms of what it thought of as preventing a wrong leadership with wrong policies going into the next general election.

PJ Are you saying that the, as it were, Gramscian predicament of the labour movement in Britain is that it has become a permanent minority which must come to terms with others?

SA In a sense, yes, though most governments have been and will be minority governments. I certainly don't see the Labour Party as comprising all the forces that are required to challenge Thatcherism or any variant of Thatcherism in the future. I think the task of the Labour Party is to construct a historic bloc of forces for progressive change. What worries me is that the imagination for that does not really exist in any area of the Labour Party at the moment and even less within the trade union movement itself.

SH I have a slightly different view. My regret is that the Labour Party lacks the capacity to appeal to some of the best elements which feel they're now obliged to rally to some other cause. Therefore, they have to be preserved by an alliance with it whereas the best of those elements ought to be distilled within the Labour Party.



PJ But if you achieved an optimum result, Stuart, you wouldn't have an electoral majority of any kind would you in this country? Maybe you would do as well as the Italian Communist Party or as badly as the French, but it would be somewhere in that range I would think.

SA I don't agree with Stuart on this. I don't want to hanker after a Labour Party which somehow embraced all the forces within itself. I think that would give us a force that would perhaps be almost incapable of movement. It has got to have ground which is distinctive, otherwise the very concept of an alliance is liable to become shapeless and lack direction.

SH I am not arguing that. But it is not enough to deal with new issues by external alliances. They also need to be confronted by internal pressure, which changes the organisation. It's not an opposition in principal to political alliances because I think electorally that's what the name of the game is. But I don't want to settle for that because I think it takes the pressure off the older rootedness and archaic forms of the past which must be transformed.

We're faced with the prospect of a general election next year or early the following year, with the Tories at the moment running strongly in the opinion polls. How do you see the shape of politics over the next five years?

SH There is a very strong chance that she'll win again and a second term I think will see very serious stuff indeed — assuming that economic conditions and the size of the vote permit. A second term without a break would mean intensifying some of the deeper elements we identified earlier. Some of the things which have looked doctrinaire to us in the present period will begin to become orthodox next time round. So, for example, an effective sector of the economy must be a private bit. Could it be anything else? The state would be for picking up those bits nobody would buy, nobody would invest in. So I think those things would come through in a much more developed thrust and begin to form a new political common sense.

SA Paradoxically, that doesn't mean there can't be any U-turn. Whoever is running the country has got to take account of all kinds of pressures that are at work internationally as well as internally and

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there's no reason why Thatcherism, if it goes through to another term, wouldn't need to do that: for example, the present rumblings on protection or the big shouting match over the EEC budget. It is in fact easier to do that in a second term if the position is reinforced because the real danger for a U-turn in the present situation is that it makes concessions to your enemies and seems to justify them. I agree with you in principle, all I'm saying is that the government may be quite adaptive in conditions where it thinks it is in a powerful position.

I have another worry, the danger of a further split in the Labour Party should there be another Tory victory.

PJ Danger or hope?

SA Danger from my point of view. One of the factors that might operate here concerns the position of the unions in relation to the Labour Party. I have wondered at various moments whether, because of political divisions between the unions, between union leaderships, there might not be a temptation to say, well trade unions must bargain with whoever's there and if the party that we're connected with has such limited bargaining power that it offers no prospect of a real change, then we'd perhaps better reconsider who we talk to, how we talk to them and on what grounds we talk to them. I think the SDP would like that. But it seems to me something that could be a real problem in the event of another Tory victory.

The other thing that worries me is the position of the trade union movement itself. Youth unemployment going on for another five or so years leaves you with a labour force with a growing lack of experience of trade unionism and what it's about. In the longer run that could mean a weakening of the basic foundations of the organised labour movement which would be very serious indeed. I suspect such continuing unemployment will also raise the question of new kinds of explosive situations, attempted terrorism, which would make the present law and order situation rather mild by comparison. All that's perfectly consistent with a victory for Thatcherism.

PJ I think that what Stuart said about new orthodoxies — we're all privatisers now or will be in five years time if the Conservatives are re-elected — is important. I certainly think that the terms of the argument will have shifted considerably after another five years. Picking up Sam's point about the trade unions, one must reckon also that trade union reform will have proceeded during that time. The likely effect of this will be to depoliticise the unions in the ideological or party-political sense. But it may also repoliticise them in the sense of using their power as lobbies, as interest groups, in a pluralistic, American-style political system to further the interests of their members.

Now we have so far had a relatively parochial discussion, but the international context of British politics could change dramatically over the next five years. I don't know what will happen to our relations with the United States or Western Europe, what the state of the world economy will be or of war and peace, but I have a feeling that these things will impinge rather more directly on British politics than they have in recent years.

Otherwise, I think all one can say is this, if Mrs Thatcher does win the next general election, which is how it looks at the moment, then there will be a period of quite firm government and everything will have to revolve around that. I don't know what we will see on the left, but I would have thought that would deepen the crisis in the Labour Party and present it with a very stark choice between either reconstituting itself as a broad party of reform or splitting again so that some of it can become a true socialist party and the rest of it can become part of the realignment on the centre left of British politics. Now if she doesn't win, or doesn't win with an absolute majority, then I think we will see a period of prolonged instability, which would reflect the longer run tendency in British politics towards instability. This instability is, in part, the product of continuing decline, and I see very little prospect of that being arrested or reversed. And it derives also from the fact that we no longer have an effective, functioning two party system. We have a two and a half party system or a three party system. We have pluralistic politics trying to escape the straightjacket of a two-party electoral system. So we could well see instability in the form of shifting and unstable party coalitions, minority governments, disputed legitimacy and so on. On balance I would come down on the side of instability as being the prospect for five years time rather than everything being put neatly together again.

SA I would agree with you that the prospect is much more likely to be that of an unstable situation. It's not inconceivable that some of the support which is shown in the polls at the moment for Mrs Thatcher will erode within the next year. There have been quite remarkable year-on-year changes in public opinion and therefore another year might produce considerable changes. But that depends not only on what we used to call objective changes but on the stances that the parties and various groups take in that period.

However, I find myself very divided on the question raised by that instability, in particular by the kind of problems posed by coalition politics. There is a great danger of immobility presented by coalition politics, look at the Dutch case. That could be a very destructive element in British politics, so I'm not prepared to give a blank cheque to it. It is going to depend very much on the basis on which it happens, which I suppose is why I'm so deeply concerned about the labour movement itself. I am arguing — this is my party political broadcast — that coalition politics has to derive its thrust from somewhere, from the forces that are engaged in it, and I don't see these as simply party-political forces. Here I see a very important role for the labour movement provided that it shows some capacity to reorganise and reconstruct itself. My pessimism derives from whether it will be able to do that. My activism derives from my desire to see that happen. □

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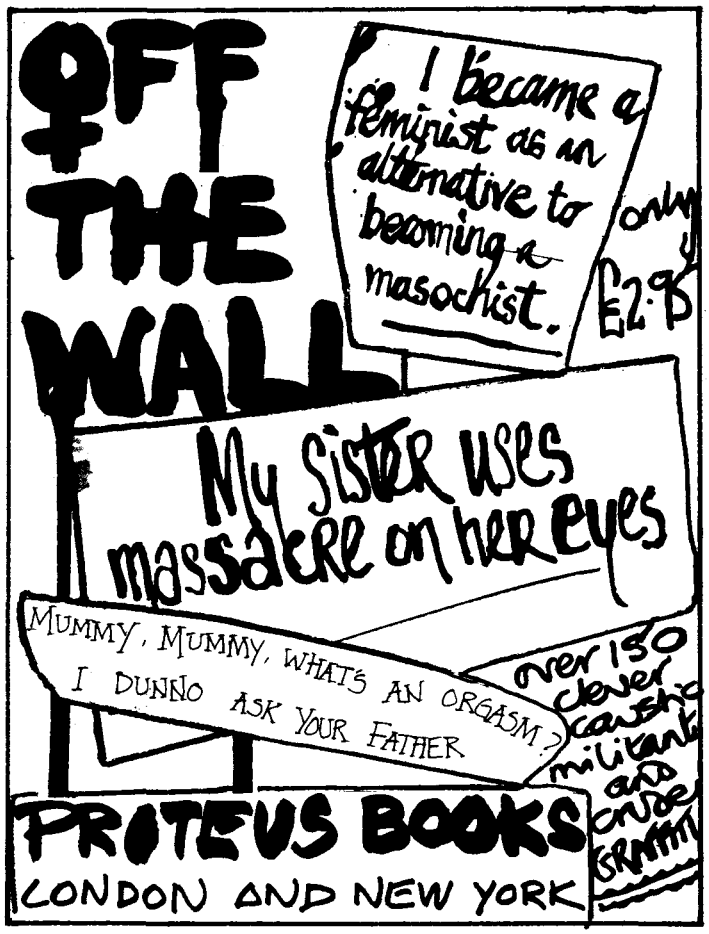
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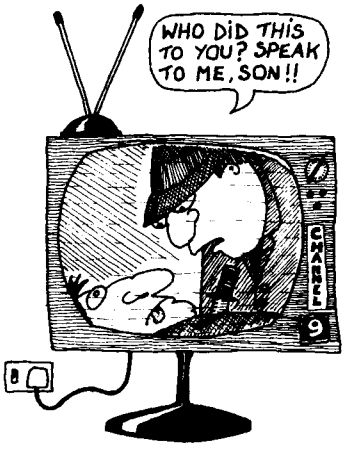
Timothy Hollins

The Cable Tripwire

Rarely can an issue of such potentially far-reaching consequences for the nature of society, culture, politics and the economy have burst upon us with the rapidity which cable appears to have done. Before February of this year few people had any inkling that cable was more than just another name for a telegram or a piece of wire. Now 'cable' promises to open new horizons in broadcasting, to extend our individual freedom of choice, to release the creative talents in our society from the constraints imposed by the existing regulatory structure of television.



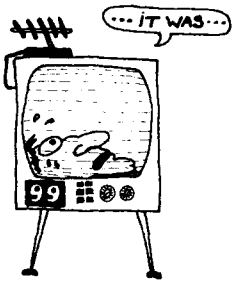
Cable, we are told, will alter the way we organise our lives, introduce new work and leisure patterns, lead to a new emphasis of local community spirit and even to new political processes in local government It will enable the communication of visual information at a more individual level and allow a much greater degree of audience response to and involvement in the programmes received. New outlets will give an opportunity for new and quite different types of programme and will permit greater specialisation of content, so that minority interests will be served not just at unsociable hours or not at all, as at present, but at all hours of the day.

These were the possibilities of cable which the Cabinet Office's Information Technology Advisory Panel revealed to an unsuspecting British public nine months ago, and there can be little doubt that the idea caught hold, encouraged by the Government's personal attachment to the concept of 'information technology'. A number of inter-departmental committees were immediately set up to consider the technical and economic aspects of the issue, whilst as a response to the fear that these developments might prove fatal to the existing, long-standing and much lauded broadcasting organisations, the Home Secretary appointed Lord Hunt and two other eminents to study their likely impact.

BBC and IBA

Not surprisingly both the BBC and the IBA have been seriously alarmed by this threat to their duopoly. The Corporation was in the process of patting itself on the back for the two satellite channels it had just been awarded, due to start in 1986, and particularly for its subscription film channel, when it learned that the whole venture might be rendered uneconomic by more earthbound transmission systems. Whilst defending its own DBS plans as giving equality of opportunity to everyone in the country to enjoy the additional satellite delivered services, it told Lord Hunt's committee that cable television, unavailable as it was certain to be to at least half the nation, would be 'socially divisive, sacrifice hard-won programme standards and coarsen popular taste'.

Meanwhile the IBA was in the midst of gearing itself up for Channel Four and breakfast TV when it discovered that quite soon these would not be the only new channels seeking financial support from advertising revenue. In its evidence to Hunt the IBA made a determined bid (backed by the BBC) to meet the threat by taking cable under its own regulatory wing, a bid which has continued since Hunt declared against the idea. Indeed it is tempting to believe that the IBA's recent censorious attitude to John Pil-



ger's nuclear war documentary, 'The Truth Game', and to Channel Four's showing of 'The Animal's Film', was due in part to a desire to impress upon the Government the need for a stricter form of regulatory control over broadcasting output than Lord Hunt proposed.

When they set their minds to it the BBC and IBA are extraordinarily powerful and impressive lobbying machines. In this instance, however, their's was a lost cause. The momentum of the commercial cable lobby, the strong support of the Department of Industry and the personal enthusiasm of Mrs Thatcher herself were all too much. By the time Lord Hunt reported, a few weeks ago, it would have been an optimistic supporter of public service broadcasting who really expected more than s/he got. Indeed, despite a relatively muted initial response from the BBC and a decidedly mixed one from the various ITV companies, there were few voices who disputed that Hunt represented a considerable victory for the cable lobby.

The Hunt Committee

And yet, of course, the Hunt Committee was

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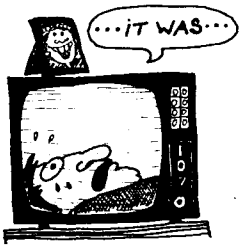
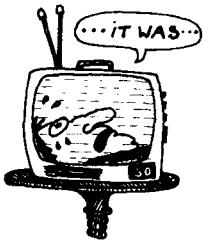
not asked to pontificate on the wisdom or otherwise of introducing cable into Britain. On the contrary it was specifically directed by the Home Secretary to take as read the government's 'wish to secure the benefits for the United Kingdom which cable technology can offer and its willingness to consider an expansion of cable systems'. Hunt's brief was not to say 'yea' or 'nay', and it would have been pointless for him to do so. He was asked simply to suggest 'how'. Nor was he required to consider every aspect of this extremely knotty question. Although the philosophy of cable is intimately bound up with the particular technological issues, which in turn are central to the debate as to whether cable in Britain can be economically viable — despite this Hunt specifically excluded considerations of either technology or economics. Perhaps this was why, with a decidedly limited remit, he considered the amount of time given to him to determine the fate of British broadcasting — a 'don't blink or you will miss it' six months — as 'sufficient'. In that time the committee



met 32 times and received 189 written submissions from interested parties. Compare this with the marathon of Lord Annan who received evidence from nearly 750 organisations, visited eight countries and took three years to complete his task.

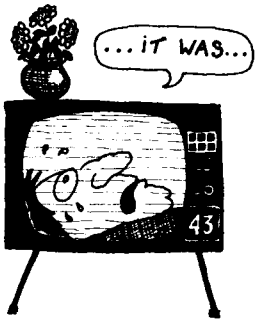
Much has been made of the essentially liberal tenor of Hunt's report — the very limited role and powers of the overseeing authority, the lack of restrictions on the amount of advertising or on charges to customers, the complete and really very surprising absence of any stipulated maximum quota of foreign (namely American) programming, the lack of any obligation upon individual channels to be impartial and balanced (except in news) and the supposedly child-proof electronically locked X-certified film channel. Yet it is also interesting to consider the other side of his proposals. Indeed a first look through the report might well have given the impression that Hunt had indeed succeeded not only in squaring the circle, but also in being all things to all people. For example the cable operators were not given the total self regulation they desired (not that they really expected it), nor the lucrative source of income known as 'pay-per-view'. Hunt also recommended that they should not be able to bid for the exclusive rights to specific national sporting events and should maintain existing broad-



> protected from the dictatorship of the market, writers and producers could take potentially non-commercial risks

cast advertising standards, as well as traditional broadcasting requirements regarding taste and decency on non-subscription channels. He proposed restrictions on who might own and run a cable operation, suggested a franchise period only one third as long as cablers were arguing for and did at least offer ideas on how the cable authority might exert itself if required.

Indeed if we go further and look at the many pious hopes and expectations in the report it begins to look less attractive to potential investors. It anticipates that a fair number of responsibilities may be imposed on any operator in the course of the franchising process. Hunt expects that the cable authority will have something to say about the technology to be used, about the leasing of channels for use by others not associated



with the operator and about the general diversity of programme sources. He 'presumes' that all operators will offer children's programming, educational and community services and that, indeed, they will actually provide some financial assistance for community participation in cable, as well as local access channels. Perhaps most ominous of all for potential operators is paragraph 86a where it is suggested that they might be expected to take some medicine with their sugar, by accepting responsibility for cabling up a commercially unattractive area in return for being given a plum franchise.

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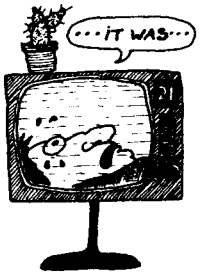
So why have the cable lobby been generally pleased with Hunt and many of the existing broadcasting camp so despondent? Quite simply because the bird given into the cablers' hands is seen as being worth far more than the two in the bush which Hunt hopes and presumes may fly in the public service broadcasters' direction. What cable operators, the old guard argue, their thinking dominated by the need to recoup investment as quickly as possible and to obtain a reasonable return, are going to provide significant educational and community services? More to the point is any operator really going to be prepared to take on definitely unprofitable franchises in addition to the ones which they believe to be commercially attractive, but which are still high risk ventures? And of course none of Hunt's hopes and expectations are binding upon the Government. Mrs Thatcher has so far shown herself to be far more in tune with the cable lobby than with the broadcasters, and may well accept the argument that, 'just while cable is finding its feet', operators should not be asked to assume commercially unprofitable if socially desirable responsibilities. The weeks following Hunt have seen strenuous lobbying on the part of the Cable Television Association for an extension of the proposed franchise period and for the setting aside of Hunt's comments on cabling unattractive areas and prohibiting pay-per-view.

> The equation in this argument is simple — more channels equals less choice

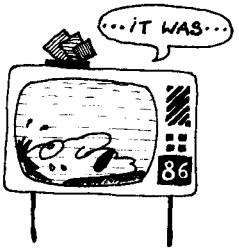
An unknown future

Above all the public service protectionists are glum because, whilst paying lip service to the new technology, they would on the whole much rather it had not happened. Audience fragmentation must, of its very nature, call into question the national licence fee, must weaken the BBC's claim to be the central and indispensable core of our broadcasting system and must highlight the fact that many people, not least influential blocs on either side of the House, no longer regard the Corporation as either sacrosanct or even very special.

The BBC knows this to be the case and accepts it. Recently Alistair Milne, the Director General, himself admitted that there was no absolute necessity for the Corporation to survive indefinitely. What is feared, however, is that, despite expressions of good intent on the part of the Government, what is actually being threatened is the very notion of 'service' which lies at the heart of our broadcasting structure. What, it is felt, the new cable channels will offer is precisely what the mass of people want, no more and no less. Broadcasting output in the marketplace will become even more responsive than it has been before to the audience's



desires, and ratings will rule. This is not what public service broadcasting as practiced by either the BBC or the IBA has been about. That, on the contrary, has always insisted on giving the audience *more* than they asked for , on providing the opportunity for a degree of innovation and experimentation in programming so that, protected from the dictatorship of the market, writers and producers could take potentially non-commercial risks and thereby

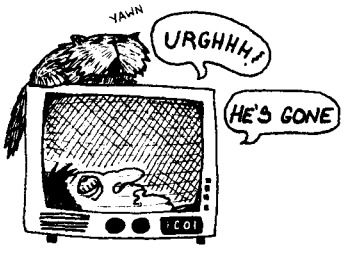


create such programmes as 'Cathy Come Home' and, in current affairs, 'Weekend World'. Indeed what broadcasters have not infrequently discovered as a result of being given this opportunity to make seemingly unprofitable programmes for apparently minority audiences is that minorities sometimes exhibit majority tastes — hence Monty Python and hence televised darts and snooker.

What is now feared is that in the full pressure of the marketplace such opportunities to innovate and take risks will disappear, with programmers increasingly taking the soft option. This is a fear exacerbated by the remarkable proposal to remove any quota on the proportion of non-British programming that may be shown. Why should profit conscious programmers spend between £30,000 and £100,000 an hour to finance and produce home grown material when they can buy in slick American series (which have already made a profit in the US and so can be sold cheaply overseas) for as little as a few hundred pounds? Meanwhile those programmes which are made in Britain will be less and less the high risk, low audience productios such as 'United Kingdom', and more and more ones which will attract co-financing from American companies such as Time-Life, and will appeal to an international market. That will almost certainly have major consequences for the nature of British television, for example in drama — yet more period costume soaps, but even fewer opportunities for plays of an essentially domestic character, commenting upon and illuminating contemporary British society. The equation in this argument is simple —more channels equals less choice.

The trouble with cable, however, is that no one really knows what is going to happen. Indeed the evidence is at times directly contradictory. Thus the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising, arguing that advertiser-supported cable will not erode ITV's revenue, suggests that there is still room for growth in advertising revenue as a proportion of GNP, and reminds us that advertising has in the past always expanded to fill the media available. By contrast the London Business School point out that Britain is already near the top of the international league not only for total advertising as a share of GNP but also for TV advertising as a share of GNP, and TV advertising as a share of total advertising. In accepting the IPA's arguments, arguments which may well signal the demise of commercial broadcasting as we presently enjoy it, Lord Hunt admitted that 'All forecasts of additional advertising revenue and the proportion which will be taken by cable are hedged around with uncertainties'.

They are indeed. The main lesson so far from the cable debate is that nothing is certain. You pays your money and you takes your choice. Or do you? □



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Keith Cowling

The Heartland of Depression

The West Midlands region, centring on the vast, industrial conurbations of Birmingham, Coventry and the Black Country (now brought together as the West Midlands Metropolitan County), and including adjacent counties like Warwickshire and Staffordshire, is now in deep crisis. The recent history of this industrial heartland, with the car industry being perhaps the best-known activity, has been unique in two respects; in the relative decline from boom to slump and in the relatively advanced state of local interventionist policy. It therefore provides an extreme case for the examination and understanding of the process of decline of the British economy under the recent restrictionist policies of both Labour and Tory administrations and of the sort of response to local crises which are currently being formulated by left wing local administrations. Such examination and understanding can provide relevant input into the process of fleshing out the local and regional aspects of the alternative economic strategy.

DE-INDUSTRIALISATION IN THE WEST MIDLANDS

The West Midlands is predominantly involved in manufacturing, and, within manufacturing, predominantly in engineering, producing mainly capital goods and consumer durables, particularly cars.[1] The state, in response to the economic crisis, has introduced a package of policies over recent years aimed at shifting the balance of power between capital and labour decisively in the direction of capital. This has been most marked in the period of Thatcher's government. The cost of achieving this is heavy and the West Midlands has borne the brunt of the onslaught because of its manufacturing base and the degree to which control over the manufacturing process within the region has been appropriated by labour.

Domestic manufacturing output can relatively easily be substituted by foreign manufacturing output: if the domestic currency appreciates relative to foreign currencies then foreign output will tend to replace domestic output in both domestic and foreign markets. Over the past three years the appreciation of sterling has been enormous and the recent decline relative to the dollar has by no means restored the international competitiveness of British manufacturing. The magnitude of the decline in international competitiveness has to be stressed. Britain's return to the gold standard in the 1920s is always talked about as a period of sharp decline in Britain's international competitiveness but the last few years has witnessed a decline which is probably four times as big — a roughly 40% reduction in international competitiveness.[2] For manufacturing particularly this represents a fundamental change affecting both import penetration and export performance. The dramatic impact is revealed in the most recent trade figures when for the first time in recorded history Britain's trade balance in manufacturing was in deficit.

The appreciation of sterling despite the relatively high level of inflation in the UK has been brought about by the conjunction of the increasing exploitation of British oil, the government's restrictive monetary policy which has forced up the domestic rate of interest, and government expenditure cut-backs which have held down the growth of domestic output and therefore reduced imports of raw materials into the UK. Coupling the massive resulting change in the exchange rate for sterling with domestic cut-backs in the face of a world slump, induced by a world capitalist consensus favouring 'monetarist' policies, has led to a rapid downward spiral in UK output with a particularly marked impact on manufacturing, and

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therefore on the West Midlands.

Impact on jobs and earnings

Since 1965 manufacturing employment in the UK had fallen by over 2.3 million by 1981, representing a reduction of almost 28%. For the West Midlands manufacturing employment fell even faster. More than 400,000 jobs were lost between 1965 and 1981, representing a reduction of 34%. Most of this reduction has come very recently. Between 1975 and 1981 more than 20% of manufacturing jobs were lost in the region, but it is in the period since 1980 that the stream of job losses has turned into a torrent, this period corresponding to the dramatic reduction in the international competitiveness of British industry. Between June 1980 and June 1981, 147,000 jobs were lost in the region and in the following six months another 35,000. Over the last six months job losses have averaged 7,000 a month leaving the current level of unemployment at 16.9% and climbing. This contrasts sharply with the position in 1965 when the region had an average rate of unemployment of 0.9%, equal lowest in the country along with the South East and East Midlands. Now the region's level of unemployment is only significantly exceeded by the North and Northern Ireland.

The region's plight is undoubtedly having an impact on wage settlements as well as jobs, and this will have a knock-on effect through the regional economy via the lower levels of expenditure of those in employment inducing further rounds of job cut-backs primarily in service sectors.[3] Most people are well aware of the very low wage settlements in BL over recent years, which have implied sharp cut-backs in real wages, but the general effect can be seen in the regional break-down of earnings as reported in the Department of Employment's *New Earnings Survey*. In 1968 earnings in the West Midlands were close to the highest in the coungry eg, the gross weekly earnings of full-time manual men, 21 years and over in the West Midlands ranked second highest in the country. By 1981 West Midlands earnings in this category had dropped to eighth position in the regional table (out of a total of ten regions), and the same was true for non-manual workers.

> in 1968 earnings in the West Midlands were close to the highest in the country

Immediate outlook

What does the immediate future hold for the region? Plans for further major redundancies are in the pipeline, and more are being announced almost daily, along with further extensions of short-time working. Alvis, Automotive Products, Courtaulds, Talbot and various machine tool firms have all announced plans for very considerable job cut-backs, and even highly profitable enterprises like Rolls Royce Aero and GEC have recently made clear their determination to reduce significantly the size of their labour force. For example Rolls Royce Aero's declared aim was to reduce its labour force in Coventry by almost one-third between 1981 and the end of 1982 and this has now received union agreement.[4] Short-time working has been introduced for BL Metro production workers at Longbridge and this will inevitably mean cut-backs and short-time working in the automotive components sector, particularly within the region.

All this means that an increase in the average rate of unemployment in the West Midlands to over 20% in the near future is almost inevitable. In some cases, for example Jaguar cars, the situation will have stabilised or improved because of the recent appreciation of the dollar in response to Reaganomics, but this is a tiny chink of light in a picture of otherwise unrelieved gloom. Even in the case of new and relatively successful products, like the Metro, cut-back rather than expansion is the order of the day. Until there is a massive shift in government economic policy, and/or in the economic policies being followed within the major Western advanced industrial countries, the regional economy will remain in deep slump.

Business attitudes

This is clearly recognised by the top managers of industrial firms within the Midlands. The Council of the West Midlands Section of the Confederation of British Industries was the first to take issue with the government over its talk of an upturn in the domestic economy.[5] There are obviously now strong elements within the CBI nationally calling for a change in government policy and the industrial heartlands of the West Midlands will be strongly represented in this movement. Splits are beginning to appear in business's position on Thatcherism and those elements with a strong industrial base within the British economy, and with a limited presence internationally, will have a rather different perception of the issues than will the City and those industrial firms whose production is less deeply rooted within the domestic economy. Dominant elements of West Midlands capital can be expected increasingly to urge significant changes in domestic economic policy. They have certainly used the Tory inspired slump to secure fundamental changes in the organisation of production, witness for example the BL Metro plant and Rolls Royce at Coventry[6], but the point is that these changes, considerable though they might be, have not solved the capitalist problem. Consider the case of BL under Edwardes which clearly had a vanguard role in the process of reasserting managerial control over production and a reduction in real wages.

Over the period since 1968, when BL in its present form was created out of the union of British Motor Holdings and Leyland Motors, BL persistently made profits *except* for a single year — 1975, despite the fact that many have, probably justifiably, claimed that management over this period was incompetent. Since Edwardes took over in November 1977 BL had made profits in *only* a single year — 1978, the one year in which his policies would of necessity have limited impact. Since then his regime has been responsible for a persistent accumulation of huge losses, totalling more than one *billion* pounds over the past four years. In his retirement speech Edwardes said "The picture is of a sustained reduction in losses

[1] In 1965 1.18 million people were employed in manufacturing in the West Midlands, representing 50.6% of total employment. This contrasted with the national situation where only 36.2% were employed in manufacturing in the same year. Direct employment in the production of vehicles in the West Midlands numbered 227,000 at that time.

[2] See estimates made by Marcus Miller which are reported in an article by Jeremy Bray, *New Statesman*, August 8 1980.

[3] The particularly difficult bargaining environment for labour is revealed by the extremely high ratio of unemployment to vacancies in the West Midlands compared with the nation as a whole. For example, in the West Midlands County in June 1982, for craft and similar occupations for every one vacancy there were 75 unemployed whereas for the nation as a whole (GB) there were 23 unemployed. For general labourers there were 669 unemployed for every vacancy in the County compared with 190 for the nation as a whole (GB). (Source: *Briefing Note — Unemployment*, West Midlands County Council, Economic Development Committee).

[4] See *Financial Times*, August 19, 1982 p6.

[5] See *Financial Times*, August 9, 1982 p24.

[6] The Metro case is quite well-known, with substantial increases in labour productivity being gained in the production of a new product in a newly equipped plant, but the more recent cases of Rolls Royce, Parkside, Coventry is in many ways more remarkable. The deal agreed with unions requires a 70% increase in productivity within the next three years without the advantages of a completely re-equipped plant as was true in the Metro case.

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. . .'[7] but failed to point out that the level of losses is very similar to what it was in 1979 when his policies were beginning to be inaugurated, and that the previous profit performance of the company had been superior.[8] Now of course too much should not be heaped at Michael Edwardes' door, given that it can be reasonably argued that the economic environment surrounding BL was generally a hostile one during the Edwardes era. However what has to be stressed is that the fundamental problems of the British industrial economy cannot be solved by policies encapsulated in a mixture of Thatcherism at the national level and Edwardesism at the industry level. That there are fundamental problems is not in doubt, that there is no other way of dealing with them is not a serious proposition.

A STRATEGY FOR RECOVERY

Two things should clearly emerge having considered the recent economic holocaust of British industry as represented by the extreme case of the West Midlands. First that a fundamental change in the macroeconomic stance of the central government is essential for general recovery to take place. And second, that in addition there must be a change on the micro side — at the level of decision-making within the enterprise and within the region, otherwise there will be an inevitable return to the old cycle of events. Keynesianism, as reflected in reflationary policies by the state, is a necessary but not sufficient condition for substantial recovery.

The general elements of a reflationary macroeconomic policy are now familiar as part of the various versions of the alternative economic strategy (AES). Perhaps it would be useful to pick out the main elements of such a strategy as they relate to the recovery of the manufacturing sector within the UK, with obvious extension to the recovery of the West Midlands. It is now transparently clear to anyone with eyes to see that the main restraint to any expansion of output and employment in British manufacturing is the lack of demand for such output. The CBI *Industrial Trends Survey* reveals that in July 1981 98% of respondents (ie firms in their sample) in machine tools believed 'that lack of demand was likely to be an important factor in limiting output in the coming months', and only 1% believed that 'plant capacity would be an important factor in limiting output . . .' Similarly in motor vehicles, 92% believed the former and 8% believed the latter. Clearly the stimulation of demand by the government could be expected to result in an expansion of output, hours of work and ultimately employment in these key sectors of West Midlands industry. There would be obvious knock-on effects through both the regional and national economy, for example via steel, electricity and coal, sectors which are also experiencing very high levels of excess capacity.

Input controls

All this looks fine except that the question arises, if demand is stimulated by a combination of fiscal (ie injections of government expenditure and/or tax cuts) and monetary measures, how can we be sure that this will not immediately be siphoned-off in an expansion of imports and a subsequent deterioration in the balance of trade? As we have argued British manufacturing has been recently devastated by a combination of declining international competitiveness, due to an appreciating currency, and a domestic and international slump engineered by restrictionist state policies. If we were simply to relax such restrictionist policies the impact on the world economy would be beneficial but the impact on British manufacturing and specifically the West Midlands would be muted. To some extent the problem would be self-correcting because the relative expansionary policies of the British government would inevitably lead to a depreciation of the currency and would therefore go some way to mitigating the present lack of competitiveness of British manufacturing. This process could be extended by policies aimed at reducing the British rate of interest and/or reducing the rate of exploitation of British oil.

But this issue should not be addressed simply by focusing on the exchange rate. Whilst a significant depreciation of the exchange rate will have a beneficial effect on British manufacturing output, and therefore the West Midlands, it will also have other less attractive features. The price of food and raw materials will inevitably rise, with undesirable consequences for inflation and the distribution of income. This could be countered in various ways but it may be more convenient to introduce import controls on a range of strategic, manufactured goods rather than a general devaluation. This should not be seen as an attempt to isolate Britain from the international community but part of an attempt to wrest the control of trade from the dominant, multi-national corporations. The aim will be to restore the manufacturing base in the West Midlands and the UK in general in order to allow the British economy to grow at a much faster rate than it otherwise would have been able, and in the process to provide a bigger market for the rest of the world economy.

I have been briefly through the elements of macroeconomic strategy because it is clear that the West Midlands manufacturing base cannot be restored by policies operating purely within the West Midlands. The Edwardes era demonstrated that BL could not be restored to profitability, despite huge job losses, and massive reductions in real wages and increases in productivity, when the macroeconomic stance of the government was so clearly antagonistic to domestic manufacturing. Similarly it would be extremely difficult to revive economic activity by focusing exclusively on firms in the West Midlands in terms of expansionary policies.[9] However this does not mean that a microeconomic and/or regionally based policy should be ignored. The present depressing period for the Left

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should be used to set up at least the beginnings of a new system of production and investment. It is essential to extend the degree of social control over the pace and direction of investment and the organisation of production not simply because of its direct short-term implications for those workers directly involved but also because of the longer term dynamic implications.

Democratic control

Two interrelated themes can be distinguished. First the present policies of the government can be seen as a response to the growth of the power of organised labour which had, directly or indirectly, led to a decline in the rate of profit in the UK. To the extent that such policies have secured their objective of shifting the balance of power between capital and labour in favour of capital then the gains made by labour have been seen to be reversible. It would seem to me that many gains *have* been seen to be reversible which would indicate *that advances made were less secure than they appeared at the time.* New structures will need setting up within which future gains will be less fragile and in which democratic control over production and investment will be more durably established.

> the fragility of past gains, usually made at the level of the individual plant, has revealed the weakness of economic advances

The second and related theme is the extent to which British economic development has been retarded by the activities of workers and their unions in resisting innovations, because of their anticipated impact in terms of job loss, deskilling or loss of control over the production process. Some have suggested[10] that this is the fundamental explanation for the relative decline of the British economy in the twentieth century, but even if simply one important factor among several it must lead any coherent alternative economic strategy towards an important role for democratic control in production and investment not simply on grounds of dynamic efficiency.[11] Thus to make gains made by workers more durable, and to remove impediments to growth, it is vital that we develop new structures of democratic control. But does this mean working simply at the level of the enterprise? It would seem to me that there are strong grounds for arguing for a regional or sub-regional level of cooperation. The fragility of past gains, usually made at the level of the individual plant, has revealed the weakness of economic advances.

Democratic control needs broadening so that advances at the level of plant or enterprise gain broad community support. This will require the involvement of powerful groups of workers in securing broad social advances in the community at large. One of the problems faced by BL workers during the initial attack on them was the lack of public sympathy for their plight. This was undoubtedly partly due to powerful doses of media propaganda. They were generally seen as a selfish group of highly paid workers, predominantly male, who had little interest in the problems of other, severely disadvantaged groups in their immediate community. As the plight of BL workers worsened attitudes to them changed, but the initial reaction was surely one of the important factors leading to the reversal of the very real, albeit narrowly based, gains. The involvement of industrial workers in the National Health Service dispute is hopefully the beginning of a more broadly based process of advance which will make government inspired reversals anywhere in the community much more difficult to obtain.

REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS FOR ECONOMIC ADVANCE AND DEMOCRATIC CONTROL

Two types of organisation could provide an important regional structural dimension to the alternative economic strategy and play an important role in reversing the process of decline in regions like the West Midlands. First, Regional Enterprise Boards (REBs) would provide a platform for advance not simply in terms of production, employment and investment, but also in terms of extending democratic control over these processes by tying the funding of private enterprise to changes in worker participation and by acquiring an equity holding in such companies, with community representation on the board, and, in the case of new enterprises, encouraging the development of workers co-operatives via funding and proFessional advice. The involvement of unions in these activities could be secured at various levels: by representation on the Regional Enterprise Board, by involvment in working out the agreement with the particular company, by representation on the board of the company (whilst recognizing the obvious potential dangers,) and by involvement in the initiation, planning and funding of worker co-operatives.

In addition the pension funds of workers in the region could be channelled into these regional ventures.[12] This is doubly important because as well as providing a huge, potential source of funds for the expansion of the industrial base of the region it would have the added advantage that it would provide a further line of advance for domestic control within the regional community. It would provide a strong element of independent action to the local community within the overall national plan of the AES. This does not imply that state funds from some National Enterprise Board should not be used by the Regional Board, but rather that such funds would provide only an element, albeit a very significant element. Second, other organisations which could play a much more powerful role in co-ordinating advance in the community are the Regional TUCs[13] at one level, and the trades councils at the local level. They could provide —more than now — the means whereby the strength of one group could be channelled into supporting the advance of various weaker groups in the local community, and in turn would provide a rallying point when the relatively strong are subjected to attack. They could also provide a forum for discussion of the activity of the Regional Enterprise Board, especially where the plans of one enterprise have

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[7] See *Financial Times,* Thursday 16 September 1982.

[8] Edwardes way of presenting the picture is strangely reminiscent of Mrs Thatcher's claims concerning the reduction in the rate of inflation.

[9] A policy of subsidising price cuts by BL in order to extend output and employment, which I have previously advocated (*Marxism Today,* August 1981), may be an exception to this general proposition. However it would have to be seen as part of a national economic policy and its efficacy would depend on the response of rivals in the car market to price-cutting by BL.

[10] A Kilpatrick and T Lawson (1980) 'On the Nature of Industrial Decline in the UK', *Cambridge Journal of Economics,* March.

[11] See Bernard Stafford (1982) *The Super-Multiplier, the Class Struggle and the Alternative Economic Strategy* Socialist Economic Review Conference, September.

[12] The theoretical arguments for rejecting the usual rate of return criterion have been made by Richard Minns, who has also written the definitive book on the role and significance of pension funds, *Pension Funds and British Cpaitalism* (1980). The arguments are basically Keynesian. The success of the pension funds depends not only on the rate of return on its assets but also on the entry of participants into the scheme. Insofar as such growth is conditional on the growth of the local economy, pension fund investment in the local economy will have a built-in self-financing element. The fund can therefore justify investing in local enterprises even if the rate of return is lower than for investing in, say, Japan.

[13] For example, the West Midlands Regional TUC has become 'increasingly concerned at the local progress in opening Unemployed Workers' Centres in the Midlands and has indicated an interest in discussions with the County Council concerning a wider, more dramatic initiative with the unemployed . . .' *West Midlands County Council Economic Development Policy Progress Report,* July 1982. The same TUC has also produced *Our Future: A Planned Programme of Economic and Social Advance* (1981).

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important side-effects on workers in other enterprises in the region.[14] Again mutually supportive activities would be encouraged.

THE WEST MIDLANDS ENTERPRISE BOARD (WMEB)

One reason for focusing on the West Midlands is that the plans and activities of the West Midlands Council in setting up an Enterprise Board are more advanced than elsewhere and it is interesting to see what has been achieved so far, what is likely to happen in the near future and to comment on its significance in terms of building up a system of intervention which will eventually play a substantial role in reversing the decline of the West Midlands.

According to the Progress Report on Economic Development Policy[15] 'the purpose of the (West Midlands) County Council's economic strategy is to defend and promote employment and investment levels in the West Midlands County'. To this end the County has created an Economic Development Unit, an Enterprise Board and three Cooperative Development Agencies. The Enterprise Board was formed in February of this year and currently has a budget of £3.5 million provided by the rates. Efforts are now being made to secure funds from various pension funds but nothing has yet been finalised. A first investment has been made in a medium-sized firm producing aluminium die casting for such customers as the Ford Motor Company and it has been suggested that the equity investment of £0.45 million by the Enterprise Board has secured the future of 140 jobs. A further 30 proposals are currently being investigated and it is rumoured that Triumph (Meriden), the workers' cooperative motor cycle manufacturer, could be the next major recipient of funds. The County has also been involved with the Industrial and Commercial Finance Corporation in an investment subsidy scheme and during 1982/83 £0.25m. was used with an

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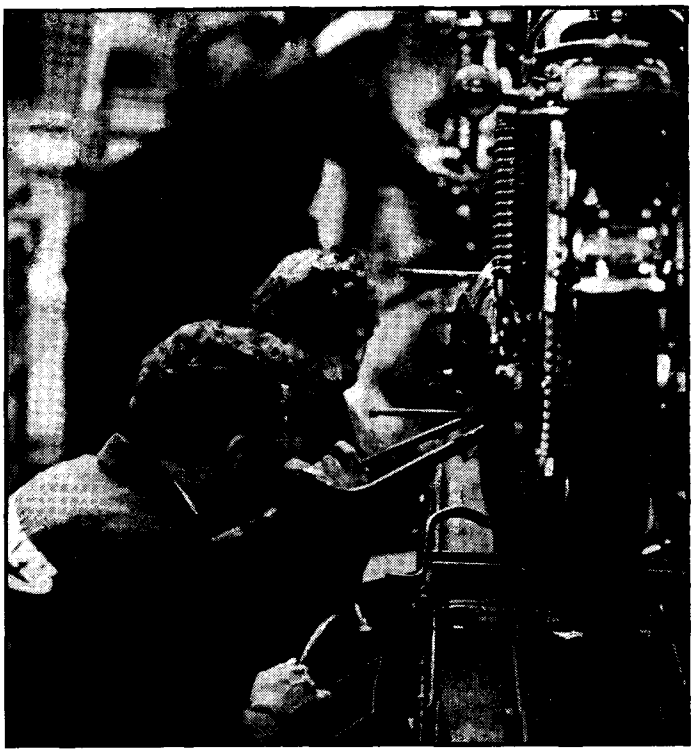

estimated 151 jobs being created. Ten small cooperatives have also received funding from the County.

Although clearly an important beginning the programme as yet looks very limited, obviously in relation to the magnitude of the problem, but also in relation to the manifesto plans of the West Midlands County Labour Party. That document suggested an initial fund of £38 million, with £30 million coming from the County Pension Fund (corresponding to the maximum permitted level of 10%) and £8 million coming from the product of a 2p rate. Access to pension fund money is clearly the key to the significant development of the activities of the Enterprise Board and the delay in finalising arrangements could indicate the presence of a substantial road block. This is not surprising given the conservative traditions of these institutions, but it is possible that Mr Geoff Edge's (Chairman of the Economic Development Committee) declared pragmatism will eventually succeed in extracting substantial funding from this direction.

Despite being limited in magnitude the activities of the Board will provide much useful experience for the time when some form of alternative economic strategy is inaugurated and in the meantime will offer at least some hope of industrial regeneration even in the current alien climate of Thatcherite policy. Elements of social control are being injected into the investment process and those firms receiving funding, or subsidised interest rates, are completing some limited form of planning and investment agreement with the County. The contents of such agreements can develop into more complete documents as experience is gained. At the moment, however, industrial democracy seems to be taking a back seat in these deliberations and it will be important to get unions involved in the process as early as possible. Nevertheless the County is already funding Trade Union Resource Centres (eg Coventry Workshop), consulting trades councils 'wherever possible' and pushing for Unemployed Workers' Centres. What is required is a more direct involvement of the unions in the actual processes of the Enterprise Board and in the drawing up of the broad industrial strategy.

Assuming that extra funding is forthcoming to make the Enterprise Board a significant force, and assuming that the objective of industrial democracy gradually comes more to the fore, and of course neither is automatic, then are there any remaining important issues? Three, at least, come to mind — the criterion for investment, the problem of competitive subsidies and the question of an overall socialist strategy for the region.

Three issues

In a paper to the Economic Development Committee in November 1981 the chairman, Mr Geoff Edge, identified the strategy of the Enterprise Board. In that paper he argued that in computing the rate of return on investments account was to be taken of lost rate income and social services expenditure which would have resulted if the investment had not taken place. 'This social accounting approach should be used when looking at the Enterprise Board on all its investments; the result will be a higher rate of return to the community as a whole than to any single investor.' (Economic Development Committee, November 1981) More recently in interviews with the *Financial Times* (August 18 1982) and the *Coventry Evening Telegraph* (September 20 1982), commercial viability has been stressed. No doubt this reflects his anxiety to assuage the fears of the pension funds rather than any radical departure from the original aims, but it is now critical that the Enterprise Board develops policies which are consistent with both the financial objectives of the pension funds and the broader social objectives of the County.[16]

The second issue relates to the potentially competitive activities of the various Regional Enterprise Boards which are evolving or which might evolve within the context of the alternative economic strategy. This is perhaps most obvious in the case of subsidised interest rates but has quite general implications. Regions could end up competing for a relatively fixed number of jobs by the competitive subsidisation of the costs of capital. This would clearly not have the redistribution outcome which was being sought. To avoid this sort of process developing would require careful coordination of the policies of the regional boards via some National Enterprise Board on which the regional boards were represented.

The third issue relates to the problems created by the lack of a plan or strategy for the region as a whole. Indeed it could be argued that such enterprise boards only make sense as components of a system of industrial planning.[17] But this would be taking things too far. Worthwhile regional plans are clearly difficult to draw-up and it is probably better to proceed, as they have done in the West Midlands, to get experience of intervention and to restrict the development of an industrial strategy to a, necessarily crude, attempt to identify areas of possible intervention. Nevertheless a framework of socialist strategy within which to assess initiatives and intervention will be increasingly required.

Finally it needs to be reiterated that enterprise boards by themselves cannot regenerate the industrial economy. Whilst important steps forward can be taken now the full impact of a system of Regional Enterprise Boards cannot be realised until they are able to operate within an economy under an expansionary macroeconomic regime. Any full solution to the crisis of the West Midlands, and of other regions, must wait a radical change in macro-policy, but this does not mean that the beginnings of significant social and economic advance cannot now be laid within the regions. □

[14] Coventry Trades Council is now involving itself in preparing a Plan for Coventry, a development which could have great significance if properly followed through.

[15] West Midlands County Council, July 1982.

[16] See S Burchell 'Local Authority Enterprise Boards; The West Midlands Enterprise Board' *Socialist Economic Review Conference*, September 1982.

[17] See A Sharples 'Alternative Economic Strategies: Labour Movement Responses to the Crisis' in D Currie and R Smith (eds) *Socialist Economic Review 1981* for an analysis of the issues at national level.

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THE MAN WHO CAME TO CHRISTMAS DINNER

Leon Broome and John Bull

Dedicated to the hosts of Christmas past, Christmas present and Christmas future.

Bing, Bong. Uncle Harry's here. It has to be Uncle Harry — he's the only visitor we ever have who gets down on his knees and shouts 'Bing Bong' through the letter box.

It's the same every Christmas — the only time we ever see Uncle Harry — he shouts 'Bing Bong' through the letter box, Mum says 'Who the hell's that at the front door?'. Dad says 'It's Uncle Harry — don't knock it'. Harry says, 'I didn't — Bing Bong', and that's usually the last laugh we have on Christmas Day.

Don't misunderstand me, Uncle Harry's no spoilsport. In fact, I suspect that anywhere else but our house on December 25 he's probably the original Christmas card. But somehow from the minute he comes through our front door and trips over the flex on the fairy lights, he does little else but spill the milk from the bosom of this particular family.

Everybody has an Uncle Harry to dinner on Christmas day. You know the sort — all yellow waistcoat and 'there's life in the old dog yet'; Christmas spirit on his breath and a sprig of mistletoe in his top pocket.

Why he's invited, nobody knows. Why he comes is even more of a mystery.

And everybody's Uncle Harry, give or take a 'Bing Bong' or two, arrives in precisely the same style — a car door slams and as an old Hillman Hunter screeches away amidst cries of 'After you with the hip-flask Eric' and 'For God's sake drive carefully — I've got a TV dinner warming under the bonnet', a red-eyed figure zig zags solemnly up the garden path clutching a Sainsbury's carrier — not quite Santa's sack, but bulging just the same.

The carrier of course contains 'the presents'. The speed at which everyone suspects they've been bought is matched only by the speed at which everyone can see they've been wrapped. My sister pretends to be pleased with her goalkeepers' gloves, I pretend to be pleased with my box of lip glosses, Uncle Harry makes a short speech on the modern world.

As he cites something he calls 'The Female Unicorn' he moves slowly towards the kitchen, one eye on his wristwatch as the minute hand moves ever closer to closing time, the other on the oven temperature guage.

Some seconds later he re-emerges from the kitchen looking as if brandy butter wouldn't melt in his mouth. Some minutes later the Belling belches forth a pall of thick black smoke — the turkey's cooked and so, for the rest of the day, is Uncle's goose.

By now the mood is ugly, in every silence you can sense the lull before the snowstorm and there is no improvement over lunch. Uncle Harry insists on assuming full responsibility for the carbonised carcase. Seizing the carver, he parries and thrusts like some mad Heidelberg swordsman and promptly reduces the length of father's nose by a quarter of an inch.

Dad bleeds briefly but profusely into the turkey before rushing from the room in search of sticking plaster. Grandad, woken by the sound of mother's sobs, sees the turkey in a pool of blood. Muttering someting about 'Can't eat that, it's raw' he whisks it from the table, races to the kitchen, and with a triumphant 'One more hour should do it', dumps the poor bird in the washing machine.

Father returns to the table. The tie mother gave him for Christmas is now a nightmarish mixture of blood red and green paisley. Uncle Harry says he hopes he didn't get socks to match and is swiftly silenced by a brussel between the eyes. There follows a dramatic change of subject. For no apparent reason Uncle Harry delivers a short piece on the uselessness of the wishbone. His general drift is that the wishbone never did the poor old turkey much good — after all he had owned the thing all his life and obviously never got his wish, which presumably was to

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be anything else on the farm but a turkey on Christmas Eve.

His point made, Uncle Harry goes into his famous 'pocket-patting' routine. Resembling an Austrian folk dancer with ants in his leder pants he skips towards the front door and attempts to exit with the immortal words, 'No fags, just nip down the pub'. This is always my sister's cue to give Uncle Harry his tree present — half an ounce of Old Holborn and a packet of Rizlas. He unwraps them with the look of someone who knows when he's beaten, and we sit, watching as Uncle Harry's chances of a quick one melt like last year's snow in spring.

The turkey, by now just a pile of bleached white bones clattering about in the twin tub, is forgotten and through gritted teeth we eat roast potatoes, sprouts, chestnut stuffing and spam. The entire meal smells strongly of 4711 cologne. A sideways sniff at Gran and it's obvious what she had at the bottom of her stocking and what we've now got at the bottom of the gravy boat.

The taste of eau de toilette still burning the backs of our throats, mother sweeps in from the kitchen, glowing with pride and carrying before her the pudding. Steaming and glistening, it is splendid; a rich deep purple brown orb bathed in the magical blue light of burning brandy and crowned with a festive sprig of freshly picked holly.

Uncle Harry leans forward and lights a roll-up on the flames.

Father looks at the holly, then at Uncle Harry. Dad begins to say something beginning with 'pr'. He doesn't finish the word. He knows that we know.

The Christmas crackers from Taiwan do little to lighten the mood.

Granddad gets the whistle without a pea — he blows on it enthusiastically all the same, starts coughing uncontrollably and sends a tiny ball of something that looks like brandy butter, but probably isn't, shooting across the room.

Gran gets the joke. Q: When is a door not a door? A: The salad dressing. No-one gets the joke. Mum gets the motto. 'Fear not death for it is the leveller.' Uncle Harry gets up to go.

As the afternoon wears on and the drink wears off, Uncle Harry's efforts to escape grow ever more desperate.

The sight of John Wayne in the Christmas movie reminds him of a sick friend he's promised to visit in hospital; the sound of Pluto's demented baying in Disney-Time reminds him he hasn't fed the dog since Remembrance Sunday, and the Queen's speech reminds him he's promised to take an orphan to see *King Kong* at the Odeon.

All these attempts to leave quietly are ignored until suddenly, as the first of Billy Smart's elephants rears its ugly trunk on the television, we realise he's gone.

No 'thank yous'. No 'goodbyes'. Just a small pile of crumpled Christmas wrapping paper, and nearby, three new, neatly folded hankies — each embroidered with the letter 'H'. Ready and waiting for next year.
Bing Bong

THE ARMSLENGTH PRINCIPLE

Peter Dormer

Britain is a country 'that has always worshipped at the cult of moderation' says Anthony Barnett in *New Left Review* (134), and the cult of moderation applied to the arts declares that the arts should not be seen as political.

But it hardly needs spelling out how an art medium — such as television — is political: the attitudes, lifestyles, and arguments expressed in drama, comedy and soap opera are value laden with ideologies that are broadly, sometimes narrowly, political. One need not forget theatre or literature which are both media with a knock-on effect on the 'mass' arts. The knock-on is helped by the fact that the same, predominantly Oxbridge, class of men (and some women) commission, direct, produce and edit in the theatre and publishing houses as in the television studios. That such a class exists, is, in itself, political.

At this point, a whiff of class politics in the air, the 'radical' takes the stage to denounce all Western art as essentially a representation of capitalist values. Then s/he condemns the offerings of the Arts Council as irrelevant or even antithetical to the interests of the 'mass' of people. Such arguments ignore the roots of the trade union movement and socialism, some of which are in the ideas embodied in, and articulated by, Western European philosophy, theatre and literature of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. Those roots, those ideas, should be common property.

Which brings me to the Arts Council — one of the country's contemporary guardians and exponents of that common property — and to a question: What constitutes an independent and radical Arts Council?

The Arts Council has a degree of self-determination described as being at 'arms length' from government; it is not a part of the civil service and it receives its money *en bloc* from the Office of Arts and Libraries and is left to spend it how it wants —in moderation.

It is odd — and yet not odd — that a right wing government should let a body spend money freely in the public sector. Odd because if the Thatcher government is prepared to dismantle parts of the welfare state then it becomes unclear why it should continue to subsidise the arts. Indeed,if the wets lose out in a second period of Thatcher government, then the Arts Council will be reduced.

But, as the wets understand, if it is continued to be thought desirable to subsidise the arts, then the armslength principle presents itself as an attractive political expedient — and one can see why by looking at bodies such as the Commission for Racial Equality. For, in areas of public expenditure and social policy such as race relations or the arts (both of which are fractious and difficult to assess), it makes sense to get someone else to administer for you and take the blame. For example, in late 1980 the Arts Council knew its 1981/82 government grant would be £6¼ million short and so it cut 41 arts organisations, including the National Youth Theatre. These cuts drew criticism against the Arts Council but none against Norman St John-Stevas — the arts minister involved. Indeed, as soon as he was shoved off to the backbenches, Stevas joined in the criticisms himself.

Still, if ex-ministers embarrass the Arts Council the Council itself gives governments rather little to blush about — seldom is the Council wayward, and always it is self-regulating. After all, instead of cutting the National Youth Theatre, the Arts Council could have cut some money to the Royal Opera and thereby highlighted in a dramatic manner, operatic even, the deficiency in the government's block grant. It dared not do so because it is afraid of (and hand-in-glove with) the Opera Lobby — the same lobby which caused GLC Arts Chairman, Tony Banks, his first defeat when he was unsuccessful in persuading all his Labour colleagues to axe the GLC grant to the Royal Opera's new building fund.

The Arts Council's strength is in the expertise of its specialist committees and panels of unpaid part-timers drawn from the

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Channel Five

arts and education and advised by full-time arts officers. Atop that lot is the Council of twenty unpaid members appointed by the Arts Minister and composed of big-wigs from the arts, universities and various establishment crannies.

The 'undemocratic' nature of the Arts Council is often criticised but the latest brickbat is in the recent and eighth of the *Parliamentary Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts.* This argues that the Arts Council should be the main *adviser* on the arts but not the main agent, ie, most funding is to be devolved to the 15 regional arts associations, or handed direct to government — so institutions such as the National Theatre and Royal Opera would be hived away from the Arts Council.

The select committee criticises the Arts Council for being unclear on whether it sees itself as an *agent* of the government or the *advocate* of the arts. The report adds: 'He (the secretary-general, Sir Roy Shaw) seemed to be looking to the government for all of his instructions in this matter (formulating policy for the arts)'. The Council, in other words, is slapped for being too cautious — thus it has, from the government's point of view, demonstrated the expediency of the armslength principle most admirably.

However, select committees have no powers and seem to wish this fate on others. Take from the Arts Council its funding roles and its potency is that of a damp rag. And, in a second period of Thatcher-led government, the Arts Council will be wiped out because a right wing cabinet committed to minimal government will kill an advisory body on the arts sooner than look at it. The select committee, having wagged its finger at the Arts Council for being a government toady then proceeds with a set of recommendations that trivialise the Council and fragment the negotiating power of the art world.

Nonetheless, the Arts Council needs to change, radically. Its current character makes it reluctant to risk innovation. Take community arts, under which umbrella are the seeds of a possible, popular expansion in the arts. Community arts can be difficult to assess and bloody — involving a lot of politicking and passion, some genuine, some opportunist or mendacious. There is bloodiness in sorting it out and making firm decisions. The Arts Council, knowing the field, adopted the shit screen of the armslength principle for itself and devolved community arts to the regional arts associations thus reducing again its own commitment to change and cutting off community arts initiatives from Arts Council expertise.

What ought to be done? Scrap the Council and fund the arts direct from government? No. All ideas benefit from opposition and a vigorous Arts Council would be good for the Office of Arts and Libraries. Second, the government does not have the expertise to make qualitative decisions in the arts — the who, what, where, how much and what for of the arts. On grounds of economy alone the presence of so much un-paid expertise at the Arts Council ought to be attractive to government. The alternative, switching the unpaid experts to an advisory capacity to civil servants in the Office of Arts and Libraries would be as useless as having an advisory Arts Council. The decisions would still be in the hands of civil servants.

Another possibility is to scrap ministerial appointees and have a Council of elected members. I find this attractive provided that the elected members are not mandated representatives of specific organisations and provided that, unlike Hugh Jenkins (former Arts Minister) it is remembered that the first constituents of the Arts Council are the public, not the artists.

Or, again, and possibly more pragmatic, adopt a mixed approach with mainly elected members and some ministerial appointees. This mixture might provide a useful expedient bearing in mind that elections of whatever kind cannot always be relied upon to throw up competent people of a wide enough range of interests and abilities. The government (a Labour government) ought then to direct the Arts Council's thinking towards key areas. The Arts Council should not be allowed to sidle out of problems such as community arts, ethnic arts, or the potential great row about subsidy for amateurs versus professionals. How the Council divides its grant would remain its responsibility. And how the Council sets about dealing with those key areas I have mentioned is again its responsibility — a responsibility for which an elected Council would be accountable to government and the public. Of course the government could always cut off the block grant but the government's ability to do that with any ease would depend upon the public popularity of the Arts Council.

AFRICAN MUSIC LINEUP

Chris Stapleton

Jazz, rhythm and blues, soul, reggae . . . sooner or later the Western craving for black music was bound to lead back to the source: Africa. This year has seen a few tentative steps in that direction. Some were financial, record companies indulging in a small scale scramble for the continent to see what they could pick up. Others were dance steps. A community of African and African influenced bands has grown up, the odd club giving mid-week slots to the new sound. And in the hipper places, people wore earnest expressions and distinguished between 'traditional stuff' and the new, compelling African pop. Whether such distinctions can be made is doubtful. Yet people were suffering from a minor culture shock. Here was a fully developed modern sound, spanning dozens of styles and peoples, doing very well on its own, and no one even bothered to tell us . . .

Sudden evidence of this appeared at the World of Music Arts and Dance festival held near Bath this summer. Artists like Prince Nico Mbarga leapt fully fledged into view. Talk of tours by Sunny Ade, Fela Anikulapo Kuti and a possible package from Zaire suggest that sometime in the near future we are about to be flooded with talent on a prodigious scale. And in the case of Sunny Ade, you can start checking your music paper at any time from . . . now.

For whatever reason, and it may depend on student numbers or better established commercial routes, the largest stock of African music reaching Britain comes from the west coast, with Nigeria amongst the most prolific. At least in English speaking West Africa. In the Francophone countries, from Senegal to Zaire, they arrange things slightly differently.

Juju music is one of the best selling forms, one which is largely confined to the Yoruba people of western Nigeria. It mixes studio technology with lilting guitar work and thunderous talking drums into a sound that recasts traditional lyrics and proverbs into the most subtle and sophisticated modern music. Island Records have already released 'Juju Music' by one of the giants, perhaps the giant, King Sunny Ade. The other big figure is Ebenezer Obey, although with up to 1,000 bands to chose from, name dropping can be a lengthy business.

Another significant figure is Fela Kuti, a

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radical iconoclast tipped by the Western press as the next Bob Marley and the subject of overseas exposés of his private life and constant harrassment from the authorities in Nigeria. Fela has fused Western and Nigerian sounds to create Afro-beat, a mixture of jazz, funk, highlife and Fela, of which he is the sole and leading exponent.

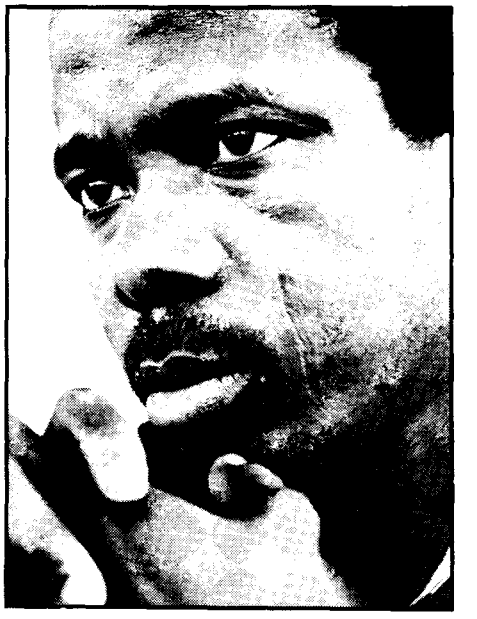
The 70s were a crucial period for Nigerian music. Artists like Sonny Okosun and Prince Nico Mbargo brought new strength to the recording scene. Ghanaians, attracted by the prospect of work, arrived in some force, bringing their expertise in one of west Africa's most potent forms: highlife.

Highlife was born from traditional Ghanaian rhythms, crossed with guitar and sometimes horns, to give an irresistible, percussive, slightly melancholic dance music. Ghana's golden period was during the early 60s, with artists like ET Mensah and the Ramblers chalking up massive reputations. Today's economic climate has blown a hole through the music business, and although bands like the Super Sweet Talks, the Sunsum Band and the African Brothers have kept their fans, it is the Nigerian highlifers like Prince Nico, Oliver de Coque and Warrior who sound the crisper and more forceful.

West Africa as a whole has seen a huge growth in disco music, largely imported, although artists like Bunny Mack, from Sierra Leone, and Sonny Okusun have developed their own disco and funk alternatives. In other places, like the Gambia, Senegal and Guinea, a strong roots movement has emerged, fusing electric jazz and dance styles with strong cultural rhythms. Ifang Bondi, from the Gambia, once purveyors of highlife and western pop, have turned aggressively rootswards and the same uncompromising style runs through bands like Etoile de Dakar, Ouza et ses Ouzettes and Bembeya Jazz.

But perhaps the most influential of all African forms, firmly established since the late 60s, has been Zairean music. Today's giants, like Franco with his TPOK Jazz or Tabu Ley, have been around for 15 years. They started off with rhumba rhythms, intricate guitar lines and two or three singers turning out sweet, but not saccharine harmonies. A new generation has now grown up, promising few revolutionary changes, but more a 'new' rhumba with a tougher sound, thicker bass and more prominent drums. Names to watch: Pablo Porthos, Sam Mangwana and Pamelo Mounka. Cameroonian music, with its heavy mokossa rhythms first popularised by Manu Dibango, is tipped as the follow up. Like Zairean music, it has a strong foothold in Paris, is well recorded and sounds harder with each album.

The latest rumbles from the record industry in Britain suggest a new push towards southern African music, with Island contemplating a compilation from Zimbabwe to go with their two Sound D'Afrique compilations from French speaking West Africa. They have already released a single by the South African band Joy. Virgin have gone east with an exhilarating set from Tanzania's Orchestra Makassy. But it would be wrong to spend your time just scouring the import racks. Britain has a number of bands well worth checking out. Orchestra Jazira is one of the best, a twelve piece outfit specialising in Ghanaian highlife. The leading



Sunny Ade

exponents of Zaire-type music up to now have been the Ivory Coasters, currently undergoing personnel changes. Guitarist Musawa has split to form his own Zaire/makossa outfit, Banana Bunch. One of the longest established musicians in Britain is Nigerian percussionist Gasper Lawal, who has an album and a single out to match his rated live act. At the other extreme, My Silent War are young and forceful and mix benga from East Africa with highlife and punk styles. Solo singer and guitarist Spartacus R has recently returned to Britain from travels in Australia and Fiji, with a new acoustic set and cassette album entitled 'Africa I See'. Finally the South African community in Britain has produced some of our best jazz bands, notably Dudu Pukwana's Zila and Julian Bahula's Jazz Afrika.

Orchestra Jazira

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LOCAL RADIO

Thomas O'Malley

The Left was caught hopping by the advent of commercial radio, and still doesn't quite know what to do about it. In 1972 the Heath government, supported by a well organised lobby of commercial interests, introduced commercial local radio. The *post-facto* reaction on the left was to accept that the main battle was lost and to make interventions by favouring marginalised community radio stations at best, and at worst, as is apparent in London today, by giving credence to the impoverished arguments of the pirate radio enthusiasts.

Commercial local radio came about because of the activities of commercial interests who were determined to bring broadcasting in Britain out of the public and into the private domain. This 'lobby' succeeded in foisting commercial TV on an unsuspecting nation, and it was the same spirit within and around the Tory Party which succeeded in bringing radio into the domain of commerce in 1972.[1]

Nonetheless the system as established is regulated by *Law*, in this case the 1981 Broadcasting Act. The law requires a number of things of the stations and in particular of the regulatory authority, the IBA. The stations should broadcast material of an appropriately 'local' nature and it is up to the IBA to ensure that they do. This was in part a concession to the widespread political view, bolstered by the practice of the BBC, that broadcasting should not be wholly subject to the dictates of commerce but should have a public service content.

But the IBA has failed to carry out its obligations under the legislation, as the work of Wright, Local Radio Workshop and others proves.[2] 'Local' radio isn't local in any meaningful sense of the word when used to describe the commercial system; this is because the IBA has consistently refused to interpret its duties under the law in anything other than a partial manner.

The IBA is, to all intents and purposes, in the pockets of the companies that run the commercial radio stations when it comes t the non TV side of its activity. This explain why the NUJ's legitimate concern about th threat to the financial viability of the com mercial radio system posed by the presen reckless expansion being pursued by th Authority has been virtually ignored.[3] Th IBA marches to the tune of those interest who want to establish the infra-structure and the case for, commercial regional sta tions which will help boost advertising reve nue. A 'financial crisis' in independent loca radio would provide the ideal pretext for th establishment of such a regions system, system which would enhance the power o the big companies and put the unions in weaker bargaining position.

The IBA is accountable *in fact* if not in law to nobody but the companies who run th stations. There are bodies called Local Advi sory Committees which are meant to advis the Authority on the public's views on thei local commercial stations. These have n power, meet in secret and are appointe without any process of proper consultatio let alone election. The IBA also holds occa sional public meetings to glean the views o the public. It makes much of the fact that i doesn't have to act of any of the view expressed at these travesties of public con

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ultation, and anyway seems to feel that public meetings are too expensive a way of gathering public opinion. The contempt in which notions of accountability to the public or to parliament are held by the Authority was summed up by the Director of Radio at the IBA when he described a clause in the 1981 Broadcasting Act (designed to force the Authority to *publicly* re-advertise radio contracts at regular intervals) as the result of 'an excess of enthusiasm during a debate in the middle of the night'.[4]

The IBA clearly shows contempt for the law. That is not to say though that the Left should take a leaf from its book. It is necessary to campaign inside and outside of the broadcasting unions to insist that, at the very minimum, the IBA enforces the spirit and letter of present legislation. Conducting local monitoring exercises is one way of starting such a campaign.

But the IBA/commercial radio connection isn't just an unaccountable structure designed to sell advertising. The work of Wright and Local Radio Workshop has shown that it produces a broadcast content which at best ignores the ideals of promoting local democracy which were there at the start and at worst produces a highly selective, conservative, racist, sexist view of the world.[5] As Wilson has argued, the advent of commercial broadcasting was recognised in the 50s to be important by elements in and around the Tory Party because 'of the likelihood that . . . commercial broadcasting would redound to the benefit of the Conservative Party'.[6] Commercial local radio, as it has developed in Britain, has certainly not undermined that prophecy, even if we should be wary of judging its effects solely on narrow party political grounds.

To get around all these problems we must start from the assumption that broadcasting must be made *more* accountable to the people it is meant to serve not less. In addition left journalists must give careful thought to the way they practise their craft, and the NUJ as whole must pursue its views on the importance of monitoring output. Journalist training for radio must be reconsidered, in order to promote the view that they should be facilitators, not mediators, of people's experiences.[7] New ways must be found of encouraging non 'professionals' (on terms acceptable to the unions) in determining the *content* of what is broadcast on local radio. This involves careful research and liaison into, and with, groups outside of the stations, and the encouragement of independent programme making organisations committed to building radio skills in the 'community'. This does not mean encouraging more public service announcements or more 'access' slots which are ultimately, as at present, controlled by the stations. It does involve a careful rethink about the ways in which content is produced on radio, and of ways of fully involving people who are not media' professionals' but who have a right to be heard in the way they want to be heard.

There are then major problems about the accountability, content and level of public involvement in existing broadcasting organisations. It is madness to promote alternatives, be they 'pirates', 'community' radio or cable stations until these issues have been tackled head on. Tackling them is not easy, because ultimately they are about the purposes and ends of broadcasting, about the relationship between producers (be they left-inclined or not) and consumers, and finally about the distribution of power in an already divided society. The Left may have been caught hopping with the advent of commercial radio, but at least there is some chance that notions of broadcasting as a public resource still operate in law and in the debates about the ends of radio. If Hunt's proposals for cable are implemented *at all* then we will look back on debates about the public duties of present broadcasting organisations with nostalgia and deep regret. □

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[1] H H Wilson, *Pressure Group*, London 1961 especially pages 144-5.

[2] In addition to Wright *Local Radio and Local Democracy* (IBA 1980) and Local Radio Workshop *Local Radio in London*, London 1982 see the excellent work of S Blanchard and J Coe, *An outline for the development of local radio in Ireland* (Gael Linn, Dublin and London, 1982).

[3] Pollak, 'Snap, Prattle and Pop' *Marxism Today* Aug 1982.

[4] J Thompson, 'Local People, Local Media', *Independent Broadcasting* March 1982 p3.

[5] Wright *op cit*; LRW *op cit*, especially pp 32,53,56 and 74.

[6] Wilson *op cit*, p 211.

[7] LRW *op cit*, p 61-3.

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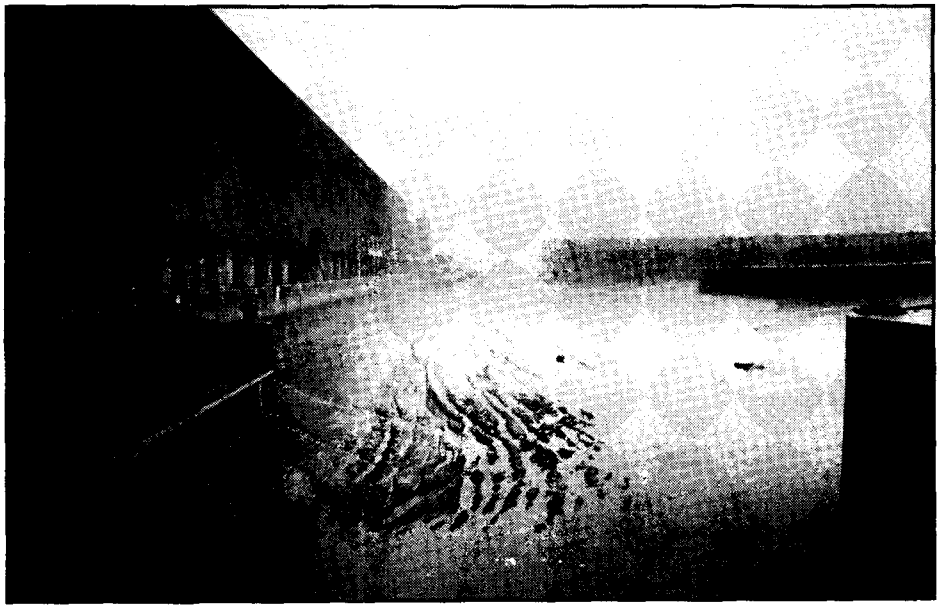
Discussion

The Unions: caught on the ebb tide

Jim Fyrth



The furore around one part of Tony Lane's article has obscured its real value and weaknesses. The decay of old industrial areas and the dispersal of industry into suburban and rural areas without strong union traditions (the same problem arose and was at length overcome in the 1930s); the spread of multi-plant enterprises and the growth of workplace and sectional bargaining do all create real problems. So do the changed balance between white collar and manual unions and the failure of unions to reflect the importance of women in the labour force. It was a pity that Tony Lane's statement of these problems was couched in difficult language and included the rather trivial comments on BR breakfasts and the rest which set so many in hot pursuit.

Marxists would expect serious discussion of the way changes in the structure of industry affect the labour movement. Ever since there have been trade unions they have continually had to face problems arising from the changing technology, organisation, structure and location of industry. Union changes in organisation and outlook, to deal with these problems, have always lagged behind the changes in industry and have come about only through struggle and conflict of ideas in the labour movement itself.

New developments always contain contradictory features. The dispersal of industry has a positive as well as a negative side. Industrial concentration did create 'fortress' areas of working class organisation but it also divided Britain into two nations geographically, in one of which the labour movement could not rule. Dispersal alters the balance (even though there are still 'colonial' areas in our islands) and I have rejoiced to see demonstrations against Tebbit, against education cuts and supporting health workers even in my native Dorset. Contrari-wise, the great gains of shop steward organisation and local bargaining, which involve some half-million lay officers in day-to-day union work, do weaken the necessity of workers thinking in industry-wide and class terms. Will Paynter is not the only one to notice this and it is significant that the most important of recent class struggles have been where national bargaining is still more important than local (railways, hospitals, mining, steel, fire service etc).

It is, surely, the aim of Marxists to fa these contradictions and solve them in a w that carries the whole movement forwar Tony Lane gives no indication of this w and his analysis is inadequate. (Though th is no reason why he should not have made and included all the points he thoug relevant.)

He nowhere, for instance, mentions mult national companies, which control son half of British manufacturing and are n just another example of multi-plant firm The problems they create for unions a becoming very clear: anti-union manag ments running down and closing plants (e Ford's Thames Foundry), turning of Britis plants into assembly lines for parts mac abroad and many others. Unions are not y equipped either in their structure, the links with foreign workers or their researc information and education services to de with these problems. But, on the positiv side, British workers are being forced t overcome their insularity. Building orga isation across frontiers has become as urge as setting up combine committees and co tains greater pitfalls. The weakness on trac union internationalism is being emphasise and this is a political as well as a trade unio matter.

Political consciousness

Indeed the question which Tony Lane, h critics and supporters have all missed is th most important — the low level of *politic consciousness* and the dominance of trac union reformism both among shop stewar and their members. For a number of years have spent a good deal of my time wit workplace representatives from railway London Transport, the printing an foundry industries and some public service Most are devoted to their unions and men bers, make sacrifices, get shot at from bot sides and give up a lot of time to the job. Bu this does not alter the fact that over half those I have met this year supported th Falklands war, that a significant numbe voted for Thatcher and that a majority hav right wing views on race, women in industr and unions, 'scroungers' and 'law an order'. Many supported incomes policie and a number support union curbs, unt convinced otherwise. Few read the *Mornin Star* or other left papers: The *Sun*, *Expre* and *Daily Star* are the most popular. Ther is a clear gap between the minority of lef wing stewards I meet and the devoted trad union majority. In turn the stewards them selves feel frustrated at what they call th 'apathy' and even anti-unionism of many their members, except where their immed ate interests are touched.

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Anyone who accuses me of 'slander' must rst explain why opinion polls show such ıpport (including 50% of skilled workers) ır this terrible government and indicate a ıajority of trade unionists supporting ıcomes policy and union curbs: or why nce left wing unions have fallen to the ght. (Please note: reporting these things is ot supporting them. I wish I were wrong.) o why is this and what is to be done?

Ron Bellamy (*Morning Star* 6/10/82 seems) say that because imperialism is in decay ıere is no objective basis for reformism (and ıith it possible corruption.) Why then does survive? In fact, from the mid 50s until at ast the mid 70s there was plenty of scope ır winning concessions by workplace bar-aining, and ways could often be found ound incomes policies. Hence the Heath ttack on workplace organisation. In those ears the standards of millions of workers se as rapidly as at any time in history (cars, ıortgages, TV, foreign holidays etc). At the ame time there was disillusionment with abour politics and lack of sympathy with hat workers took to be communism. The UC did launch a great wave of trade union ducation, but this was for training shop ewards in their job and was devoid of poli-cs — though that has changed considerably with the crisis and the efforts of those involved.

Media

Tony Lane underestimates the influence of the media in a climate so objectively unfavourable to socialist politics. Workers are not taken in by a *Sun* attack on their own industrial action. But the capitalist domination of all communications since the war (compare the press read by trade union activists in the 30s and today) has systematically trivialised issues, launched vendettas against individuals such as 'Red Robbo' and Ken Livingstone and, most important, drowned political thought in a flood of laugh shows, soap operas, bums'n tits newspapers, space invaders and the rest. In the absence of any left offensive what was to be expected? (And this is not to denigrate the enormous efforts and successes of individual struggles and high point demonstrations, nor the advances of the women's movement, CND and others.)

The greatest responsibility for reversing these trends must lie with the Communist Party. No other party can raise the political consciousness of trade union activists in a way that can advance the whole class. (The Labour Party has never been interested in political workplace trade unions and the ultra-left is divisive, romantic and élitist). But many in the Party see winning political leadership in the unions mainly in terms of organising to win elections for leading posts: While this is necessary, without the political conviction of trade union members, the Right will always have the advantage in its organising.

Besides tackling the problems which come from the changes in industry noted by Tony Lane, the labour movement must have its own press, have access to the media and find ways to counter the effects of hostile propaganda. There must be trade union education which deals both with immediate political questions (alternative economic strategy, defence of rights etc,) and with fundamental questions of class, capitalism and socialism.

But, above all, there must be workplace groups and branches of the Communist Party carrying on steady political work, linking with Labour Party workplace groups where these exist, selling the *Morning Star*, rank and file journals and pamphlets, issuing their own leaflets and broadsheets, discussing political questions day by day and building unity around political campaigns. Otherwise those now wallowing in the political Slough of Despond will never climb out and take the British road to socialism. □

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Ken Livingstone on the New Statesman

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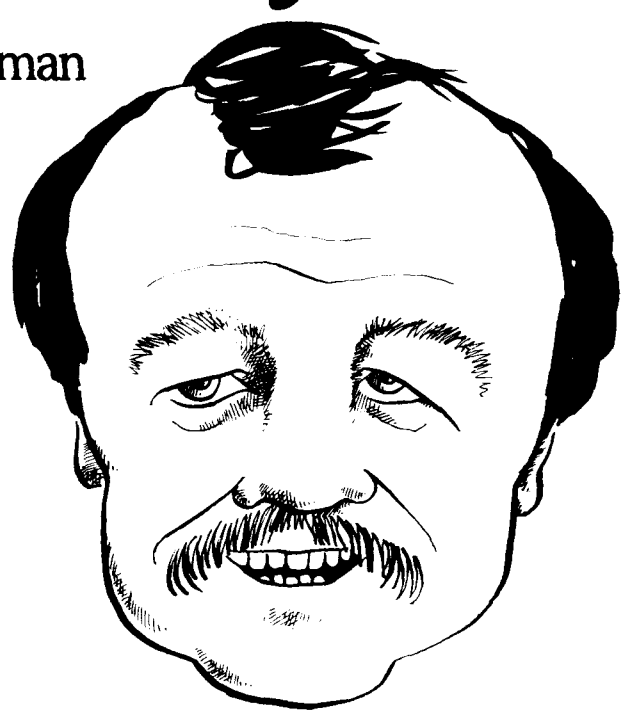

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Reviews

THE POLITICS OF THE LABOUR PARTY
Dennis Kavanagh (editor)
Allen & Unwin 1982 pbk £4.95
ISBN 004 329038 8

This book has a beguiling title and the editor, Professor Dennis Kavanagh, is an able, energetic and empirically skilled political scientist. If the phrase 'political economy' would sound to his ears either Marxist or Adam Smithian, yet his past work has been willing to move a little bit beyond David Butler's precise and nice but somewhat narrow ground of electoral studies: if the person in the street thinks of political science at all, s/he probably thinks of psephology — and that is when the BBC sends for David Butler and Dennis Kavanagh. Kavanagh and most of his collaborators are interested in recruitment, membership, measures of elites, activists, apathy and forms of participation (or their negation).

Nonetheless, though this kind of book is a small step forward from election studies or even studies of attitude changes through time, it is still either a bit catch-penny or an epistemological confusion to call it 'the *politics* of the Labour Party'. For it contains no discussion of doctrines and only the most glancing and incidental discussion of policies. One does not need to be a Marxist to find it a trifle untheoretical. The late Bob McKenzie to whom the book is dedicated, in his essay makes plain once again that he thinks the policies of the Labour Party are *wrong* in general because the Party's democratic structure leads both to lack of realism and to a contradiction with the formal structure of British government itself. Over thirty years ago he first stated the thesis that a decentralised and democratic party constitution was ill adapted to working a centralised cabinet system. That was his doctrine. His theory was that the governmental system shapes the internal structures of the parties. This might be held to be a classic example of what was once said to be Herbert Spencer's only idea of tragedy: a theory killed by a fact.

But the more the actual behaviour of the Labour Party falsified his theory, the more he ignored all that and just iterated and reiterated the doctrine. Now I have always agreed with his doctrine, only reached a different conclusion: he says, so much the worse for the Labour Party's constitution; whereas I say, very nervously and cautiously, that there is reason perhaps for believing, on very broad historical and comparative grounds, that the British constitution could possibly change, might be reasonably thought to need changing, may perhaps be a drag on (as Marxists would say) the means of production; even conceivably reflects in a fairly systematic manner the conventions and interests of an historically regressive ruling class.

Actually it is a bit unfair of me to complain that the book is untheoretical, since as the preface notes Pat Seyd gave a paper at the conference on 'Labour and the Left in the 1970s' and I gave one on 'Labour and the Intellectuals', but neither of us were willing to see our papers published. For myself, it was a speculative paper, so they weren't very interested; also I deplore the notion that conference papers should always be published (that kills all possibility of speculation and critical thought); and I further objected that most of this group, in September 1980, seemed to be gathered together in the name of Shirley Williams to provide statistical proofs that the Labour Party was collapsing and that a new social democratic Jerusalem or Hampstead Garden Suburb was about to emerge from the mists. My mildest scientific or logical objection is that the second proposition does not necessarily follow even from the hypothesised truth of the first. Far fro being neutral, as they play-act for the BB four of the contributors are simply reason advocates of a centre party — as was B McKenzie. I can respect that advocac though I do not share it; but not in the fan dress of pseudo-science.

The Labour Party *has* lost members. T new activists are not predominantly worki class except by conviction and adoptio They are at odds with Labour voters. Th are frequently impatient and unrealist sharing Messianic Bennite beliefs th society can be transformed in the life of new 'truly socialist' Labour governme (and a damned good chunk of 'irreversit transformation ' done in the first 100 day They may not be theoretically aware that social revolution, if seriously attempted, not a street theatre, will take decades a must move through stages. Social dem cratic political scientists can demonstrate this, though the last proposition is mine, n theirs; but the polarisation that has driv them from the Labour Party has surely n arisen primarily from within the labo movement: a more profound analysis has look at the changing ideology and soc structure of Conservative Party leadershi To put it simply, it is Mrs Thatcher, rath than the New Left, Benn, Tribune or Mi tant, who has polarised British politics, rather has completed the historical work th Heath began in 1970 before he lost h nerve. The Tory Party, with its ethic of gentlemanly paternalism, has finally cor near to transformation into a capitalist li eral party. Perhaps the wets will fight back wish them luck, for it is possibly the on short-term hope for at least some of t unemployed; but I doubt if they can wi The old Baldwinian 'masters and men' eth of the factory firm cannot survive the deli erate strangling of industry by the *imp sonal* ethic of the city, finance capit international finance capital, which alo prospers. The middle ground is destroye The centre cannot hold. Some still flee fro reality or enjoy a last gasp of nostalgia out distaste for the struggle: the inter-party well as the intra-party struggle.

Ivor Crewe examines voting data and at tude surveys to show both the decline in t vote and the growing gap between the belie of Labour Party activists and the Party traditional supporters. He doesn't put a fo wrong on the narrow ground, only the cor pany he keeps carries the implication. But similar study of the Conservatives wou show a less drastic but similar movemer Alas, the lost voters and the lost membe may not turn anywhere, except inwar towards the television (as Orwell fearec

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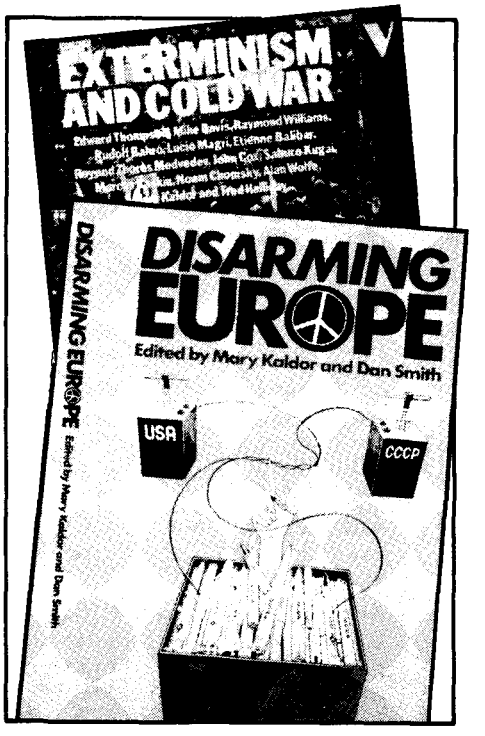
ıey may simply drop out of the polity. Paul Whiteley demonstrates a statistical correlaon between poor economic performance by .abour governments and a declining numer of activists; but he cannot show a causal ɔnnection. I suspect, for instance, that a ɔod deal of traditional party activity is dislaced into pressure groups (they seem alive nd well as never before) and that the dishartening of the old activists had less to dɔ 'ith the economy (there might seem less eed to be active if things are prosperous) ıan with the style of government adopted y Harold Wilson, no populist he. Hugh errington is very good in a solid, commenense way on why the Left grew in strength ı the PLP and on types of Left, but he ıtrudes a tedious exercise in statistical analsis of Early Day Motions which are about s representative of anything as nothing (I ıought even his fellow political scientists ad told him that twenty years ago, but we ll carry on doing what we can do).

Dennis Kavanagh himself looks at the hanging elite structure in the Labour arty, the replacement of the old solid work-ıg class local leaders by, as it were, the new ɔcial service class or what Tories call ɔolyocracy'. But his analysis is superficial, nless he is a Bennite — which he isn't. Whether or not leaders are socially represenıtive of their followers does not have immeiate policy implications. The Left is ypocritical or muddled on this one too: nly working class people can bring in ɔcialist policies, they say; and Social Demoratic political scientists show that the new .abour activists are mainly middle class, nplying that they should therefore have ıiddle ground Social Democratic policies. ligid Marxism has brought this one on self. Ideology is conditioned by class but ot determined by it. I put it to Professor Kavanagh, for instance, (if he doesn't ıstantly denounce me as a disciple of Hanah Arendt) — that some of the middle class ctivists may be *thoughtful*. But then ıought vanished from this anthology when 'at Seyd and I felt we would rather not front olitical doctrines we did not share. This ook then is totally inadequate as a study of he Labour Party and I suspect Dennis Kavanagh knows this, but publishers emorselessly force editors to claim system ɔr a miscellany. 'The ground is shifting ıder Labour and indeed under the British 'arty system', says the editor in his introuction. So it may be, and who knows whither but they don't prove it. The polls at he moment seem to make fools of most of he authors. It may all change again: the lectorate is in a volatile mood. But political cientists should either commit themselves less readily or more profoundly. Election results may prove trivial compared to the deindustrialisation of Britain. To be fair, there are two essays in this book that are not open or crypto-Social Democratic, and presumably the authors have allowed them to be printed either thinking that the book was neutral, or in friendly spirit to the editor — that might have swayed me if the contents had merely been poor rather than politically objectionable. Colin Crouch writes on the peculiar relationship of the Labour Party to the trade unions. He recognises tensions and contradictions, but they are those of the system itself: meanwhile we work with them, he has no easy gimmicks of trade union reform. And Jim Sharpe writes on 'The Labour Party and the Geography of Inequality: A Puzzle'. Why, he says, has the party not tried harder in government to redress the huge regional variations? And he shows the growing North-South, rural-urban split between the parties. The answer to the first question is presumably that the size of the task was beyond them. But his interesting essay raises in my mind the reality that Labour when at its best is close to its roots. It may be that these roots need defending. It is unlikely that central policies will achieve national equity (let alone equality) for decades. Why then is the party so rigidly centralist, so anti-nationalist and anti-devolution and luke-warm in its defence of local government? I think this is because of the old myth of the virtues of centralised planning; but that planning cannot work at all until we have regional and local experience of working socialist institutions. Both Bennites and Social Democrats talk a lot about participation, but oddly they don't like the form it could actually take in Scotland: I would rather have a socialist Scotland than nothing. Politics and political speculation aside, the narrowness of this book and the failure of most of the authors to examine their presuppositions, is a sad reflection on the state of British political science: so much skill and competence, so little thought and theory.

Bernard Crick

EXTERMINISM AND COLD WAR
Edward Thompson and others
Verso 1982 pbk £5.50
ISBN 0 86091 746 0

DISARMING EUROPE
Mary Kaldor and Dan Smith (editors)
Merlin 1982 pbk £3.60; hbk £10.00
ISBN 0 85036 278 4



By and large the new movements on peace in Western Europe which have arisen so dramatically in the last three years, gained their initial impetus and momentum from forces beyond the ranks of the organised Left. Yet generally the Left has welcomed and got heavily involved in the peace movement, and accompanying this involvement has been a flurry of leaflets, pamphlets and books analysing the new cold war and the movement's perspectives.

Disarming Europe is a collection of essays given at an END conference in Amsterdam. END has played a valuable role in the new wave of peace campaigning and this book is a useful collection with an informed, thoughtful introduction. But it is *Exterminism and Cold War* which is the more substantial book under review here.

Edward Thompson was one of the socialists to recognise the significance of the peace question fairly early and to play a major part in the generation and organisation of the movement. He has effectively used his polemical skills to arouse public concern and expose the double-talk and hypocrisy of governments, militarists and establishment apologists. His article published in 1980 *'Notes on Exterminism, the last stage of civilisation'* was an ambitious and novel attempt to theorise the seemingly endless escalation of nuclear arsenals and to explain the nature and logic of the present conflicts between the USA and the USSR. This ambitious book compiled by New Left Review, consists of Thompson's initial essay and 13 articles taking up or developing themes in his initial piece, with Thompson himself

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'oviding some concluding comments. 'hile obscure New Left terminology is evi-:nt in a number of places — and indeed hompson's own rhetoric at times is rather)aque — these essays form a valuable col-ction covering many themes and topics ith diverse viewpoints. In this brief review intend to touch on just three of the themes ised.

Firstly, there is the question of the inter-itional nature of the cold war. The essays / Davis and Halliday emphasise the global mensions and challenge the notion that urope is the sole arena of conflict. Halliday particular, in a wide-ranging essay, illus-ates and unravels many of the conflicts and ntradictory struggles in different parts of ie world and the relationship of the two ajor powers to them. This corrects a ten-:ncy to view the new cold war as just about urope, a point which Thompson concedes his reply where he argues that Europe ould be seen as the weak link in the cold ar. Whether this is objectively the case or erely political optimism remains unclear.

Secondly, Thompson's tendency to :cribe equivalent responsibility to both ajor powers for the escalation of the arms ce and to view them as locked into a logic exterminism is strongly challenged by veral contributors. The sharpest, most werful rebuttal comes from the Medve-ev brothers whose historical survey clearly dicates the primary responsibility of the nited States for the continual escalation of ie nuclear arms race. Their essay also ndermines the rather idiosyncratic distinc-on that Thompson seeks to make between ie causes of the cold war and its effects. The ledvedevs show that an understanding of ie latter is dependent on an analysis of the rmer: the two cannot be separated. 'hompson is on stronger ground when he iticises specific actions of the Soviet gov-nment such as its occupation of Czecho-ovakia in 1968 and its opposition to olidarity. Such actions undoubtedly make more difficult to win popular support in ie West for detente. Yet these actions can e criticised — as indeed the peace move-ent has done — without arguing that both ajor nuclear powers are equally respon-ble for the arms race.

Thirdly, implicit in the views of several ntributors, is the idea that the peace move-ent needs a wider political programme. udolf Bahro in an article reminiscent of the assic, utopian socialist tradition, links the eace movement with the ecological ruggle. Thompson himself is keen to link ie movement with campaigns to democrat-e the states of Eastern Europe; while Davis es the peace movement as one aspect of the international class struggle and implies that the movement requires a clear, anti-imperialist perspective. Other variants of these positions are to be found within the peace movement. They must all be resisted. They are all attempts to load the peace movement with wider, political issues. To take these on board can only narrow the movement's base of support or present it with tasks which are not within its capacity to solve.

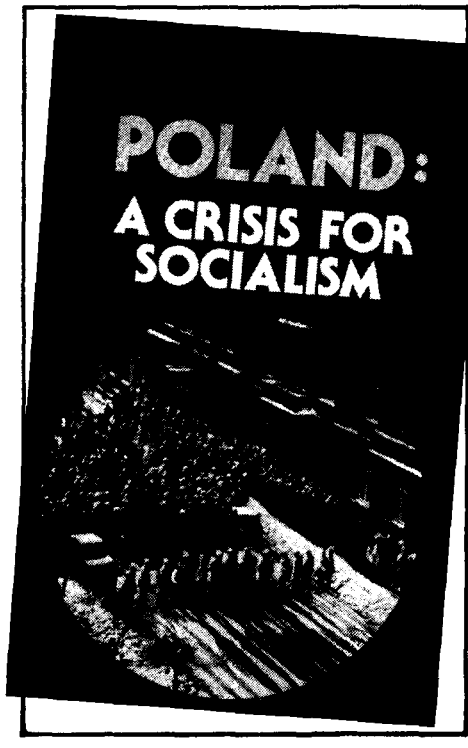
To argue that the peace movement's main concern must be nuclear disarmament does not mean that socialists should not present their broader ideas and analyses, but we must resist the temptation of imposing our formulations on the movement. Indeed, the Left itself must recognise that it has things to learn from the peace movement. If we work in a non-sectarian, committed way then undoubtedly many of our ideas will be listened to and discussed. Perhaps the best starting point from the collection reviewed here would be Magri's article, which combined a clear commitment to a nuclear-free, non-aligned Europe with a call for new economic relations with the Third World. Here is a serious attempt to grapple with the North-South contradiction and integrate it into the perspectives of the West European socialist and peace movements. It is certainly an article that requires careful study by all on the Left. Indeed, so does the book as a whole, so try to persuade your local library to purchase a copy even with its depleted funds.

Jon Bloomfield

POLAND: A CRISIS FOR SOCIALISM
Martin Myant
Lawrence & Wishart 1982 hbk £9.95
ISBN 0 85315 557 7

It is difficult to watch the unfolding of the crisis in Poland without a sense of deep foreboding. A destabilisation of the second largest member-country of the Warsaw Pact, with the emergence of an anti-communist government, would upset the strategic equilibrium in Europe and be fraught with incalculable consequences.

Poland took the first steps along the road to socialism under inauspicious circumstances. War and Nazi occupation cost the lives of more than one in five of her people.



Nearly two-thirds of the country's mining and industrial establishments, over half its power installations and four-fifths of its transport were destroyed.

National sentiment — a legitimate reaction to over a century of Austrian, German and Russian domination, but frequently nurtured by nostalgic recollections of a 'Greater Poland' and illusory, idealised images of Poland's past — was strong. So, too, was a catholicism tinged with mariolatry and a hierarchy deeply conservative in its political and social attitudes. Poles nursed memories of the Soviet Union's recovery in September 1939 of territories seized 19 years before at a time of Soviet weakness. They held the Soviet Union responsible for the massacre of Polish officers at Katyn and for the defeat of the 1944 Warsaw uprising. They saw communists as Moscow's puppets. Guerrilla bands operated in many regions, assassinating communists and government officials. In the words of a Polish communist, aptly quoted by Martin Myant, 'the working class had sufficient support to take and hold power, but in that period it did not have the majority on its side'.

Under communist leadership the Poles rebuilt their country out of the devastation and ruins of war and established new industries in previously backward areas. 'The extremes of poverty, associated especially with unemployment, were eliminated and the society they created was considerably richer and more egalitarian than the prewar Polish republic', writes Martin Myant.

Attempts to follow a 'national' road to socialism, based upon a broad coalition of democratic forces, pluralist and evolutionary in concept, foundered as the cold war intensified, strengthening the hand of those

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who saw the 'leading role' of the Communist Party in authoritarian terms, who believed that the class struggle intensified as socialism was built and who rejected the possibility of any 'national' road distinct from that pursued by the Soviet Union under completely different historical circumstances. At the end of the 1940s 'monolithic' structures and highly centralised planning systems on the Soviet pattern were imposed, pursuing over-ambitious and autarkic programmes of accelerated heavy industrial development. Democracy atrophied. Political life degenerated. Those associated with earlier 'national' policies were executed or jailed. Freed for the correctives of criticism and debate, economic policy lurched towards unreality.

Martin Myant sees democracy as the central problem of Poland's crisis. He argues — optimistically, some may think — that Poland's crisis 'is not evidence of a failure of socialism in general, but of a particular model of socialism in which power is monopolised within one ruling party', in which 'no legal opposition is allowed and neither are there independent mass organisations that can criticise or challenge those in power'.

An opportunity to initiate a process of democratisation which could create 'a model of socialism in which the people had the final control over those in power' came in 1956, after the Soviet Communist Party's 20th Congress had denounced the Stalin cult and its consequences and acknowledged the possibility of 'national' roads to socialism. The opportunity was lost and Poland has suffered a series of political and economic crises, the most serious and protracted of which began in 1980 against the background of a catastrophic deterioration in Poland's economic situation. Martin Myant sees the emergence of Solidarity as offering a new opportunity to initiate a dialogue leading to democratisation and economic reform.

The introduction of martial law (followed 10 months later by the banning of Solidarity and all other unions as a preliminary, it was said, to the launching of new union bodies) has made a solution more difficult: 'The road to demoractisation has been blocked for the foreseeable future and that is a serious blow to socialism both in Poland and throughout the world'.

Martin Myant believes that the fairest assessment of Solidarity 'would seem to be that it was neither a definitely and consciously socialist organisation, nor was it anti-socialist. It had grown out of opposition to a particular model of socialism the failures of which were so dramatic that many people no longer associated anything positive with the term.' But a serious analysis of the Polish crisis 'cannot be a simple defence of Solidarity', he writes. Its 'deep and widespread hostility' to the Polish United Workers' Party (PUWP) and 'a common failure to appreciate both the depth of the economic crisis and the realities of the internatio situation' made agreement more diffic But he sees the greatest obstacle in the ina lity of the PUWP to institute a 'major a inspiring' programme of democratisati and reform which would give the mass of t population the feeling that they had a r say in major government decisions.

He also discounts the fear, voiced by G eral Jaruzelski when he announced the int duction of martial law, that the cou events were taking could have culminated civil war: 'only one firearm was found in t premises of a Solidarity member'. attaches little importance to Solidarit refusal to face up to the implications Poland's economic plight, or to the grow of confrontationist trends within Solidar some of which called for an escalating stri campaign, preparations for a provisio government and a review of Poland's re tions with the Warsaw Pact.

Mieczyslaw Rakowski, a Polish Dep Prime Minister, last October spoke of fierce anti-communist campaign' bei waged by 'the radical wing of Solidarity a warned that 'in Poland now, if you had election to the Sejm (parliament) an an communist front would have the upp hand'. Martin Myant at one point refers another connection to Rakowski's func mental failure to understand the depth of t crisis'. Perhaps Rakowski understands only too well.

Dennis Ogd

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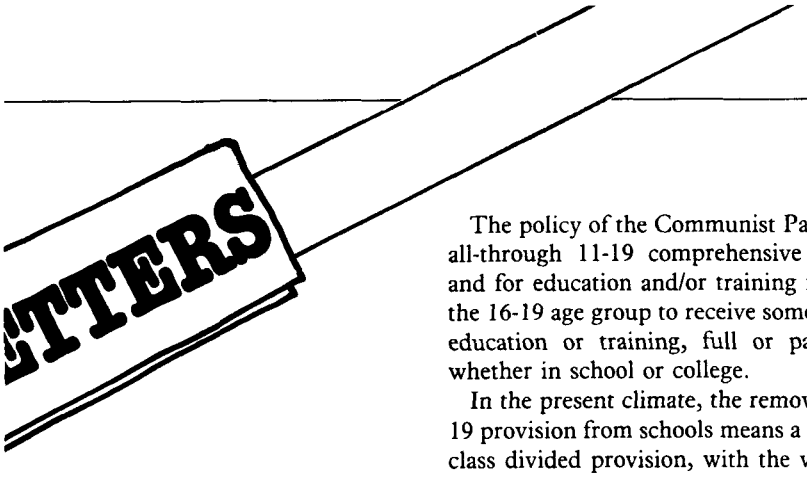

IE NATION

bert Gray's argument for the necessity of ɔcialist re-definition of the interests of the :tish nation (MT November issue) has ious and disturbing implications. For egral to this re-definition is the rejection 'abstract internationalism'. Remarkably ay seems to, in effect, reject any concep- n of socialist internationalism as well. rtainly, he underplays the importance of 'nation' as an ideological tool designed to ıce the central contradiction of capitalist iety, that between labour and capital.

ıs an historical precedent for the realisa- n of this re-definition, Gray offers the riotism of socialists and communists in Second World War when 'even the ional flag became . . . the property of the ft as well as the Tories'. Surely, socialists l communists should have been fighting British capitalist class that, in part, ısed the war, rather than German work- ? The commendation of the AES under- :s the fundamental anti-international ıracter of Gray's proposal because import ıtrols central to the AES, would only ke workers abroad redundant.

Such a conception of the British 'nation' is y similar to Mrs Thatchers. If language ermines our perceptions socialists should ison the 'nation'. Socialism is inter- ional or it is nothing. 'Workers of all ıntries, unite!

Jon E Lewis, Cardiff

CONDARY MODERNS

rite with reference to a statement in the tober issue of Marxism Today in the sec- n entitled 'Focus'. You are correct to say t 'Manchester is in favour of tertiary col- es' but that is not a 'general opinion' as ı imply.

The policy of the Communist Party is for all-through 11-19 comprehensive schools, and for education and/or training for all in the 16-19 age group to receive some form of education or training, full or part time, whether in school or college.

In the present climate, the removal of 16-19 provision from schools means a return to class divided provision, with the voluntary sector (schools partially, but not wholly, funded by the local authority, eg, Roman Catholic, Church of England) remaining 11-19 and becoming the 'new grammar school' whilst the 11-16 county comprehensives become the 'new secondary moderns'.

Howard Hollands, London

BRITISH NATIONALITY

I wrote to you on May 3 criticising Paul Bew's article on the Irish elections, in which he complimented Garrett Fitzgerald on his 'constitutional generosity' and presented Fine Gael as a 'liberal' party preferable to Haughey's Fianna Fail. You didn't see fit to print my letter.

Now we have Mike Morrissey's confused article on the Northern elections in the October issue, rightly criticised by Joan Joney from Portsmouth in the November issue. (Do you have to be English to get your letters printed on Irish matters?) And to cap it all in November we have Robert Gray's incredible farrago on British 'nationality'. To what level has Marxism sunk in Britain? *Of course* British 'nationality' is a preserve of the Right. Ask Sir Oswald Mosley's shade, or the National Front. It constitutes a hegemonistic bid by the English ruling-class to subsume Welsh and Scottish nationality into a hybrid British system presided over by a British ruling class, to which the Scottish and Welsh (and indeed Irish) landlords and capitalists are recruited via the public-school/Oxbridge system. The Left doesn't have to buy this nonsense. The Irish, Scottish and Welsh national movements deserve *support* from the English working class, who should welcome them as allies in the struggle to dismantle the British Imperial State, leaving the road clear for an English Socialist Republic within which English nationality can blossom, unencumbered by hegemonist illusions.

The English Left does not have to cripple itself with a hegemonist vision of a 'Socialist Britain' as a unitary 'nation-state', thereby losing the support of those increasing segments of the Scottish and Welsh people who see control by a remote ruling class in London as the central problem.

This topic deserves analysis in depth, with a good conference, subsequently written up, drawing on the experience of those who have been active in this field for decades, such as C D Greaves and the Connolly Association people, the Irish Sovereignty Movement and other progressive elements who have refrained from allowing their disagreement with the Provisionals' tactics to cloud their vision of nationality.

Roy Johnston, Dublin

THE ASSEMBLY

The article in Focus in the September issue of *Marxism Today* prompted some questions from Ms Joney (November issue). The article was an attempt to review the major political forces and those of the Left with respect to the Assembly elections. The starting point must be Unionism because in all its forms it has a commanding electoral position. Since the Unionist bloc has fissured into two major factions, it is interesting to compare and contrast the positions of each. Moreover Unionism as a social phenomenon has been characterised as divided between 'populist' and 'anti-populist'. Thus the two factions have increasingly tended to stereotype according to each of those categories. The Official Unionists have become integrationist and monetarist in a direct tradition from people like Shender in the 30s. The DUP expressed on the one hand sectrianism, but on the other a relative progressiveness with respect to economic issues. Thus they have a much clearer idea of what they want out of the Assembly.

The Official Unionists, with the exception of Harold McCusher, have no difficulty in endorsing Thatcher economically. In that sense, the DUP are the major anti-monetarist force.

In my view the task of the Left is to challenge Assembly members on the economy, social policy, poverty etc. Not only does this establish a politics which inhibits a huge talking shop, but it possibly exacerbates the *internal* contradictions within forces like the DUP. The impotence of the Assembly in legislative terms is not relevant since the idea is to use it as a forum in which the British state can be engaged. So, in answer to the question of who will raise these issues, they will be raised by forces *outside* the Assembly (where the Left has a marginal significance). The object of any pressure that can be mobilised will be those forces *within* the Assembly.

Mike Morrissey, Belfast

We welcome your letters for the January issue. They should be no longer than 200 words and arrive at the office not later than Friday 3 December.

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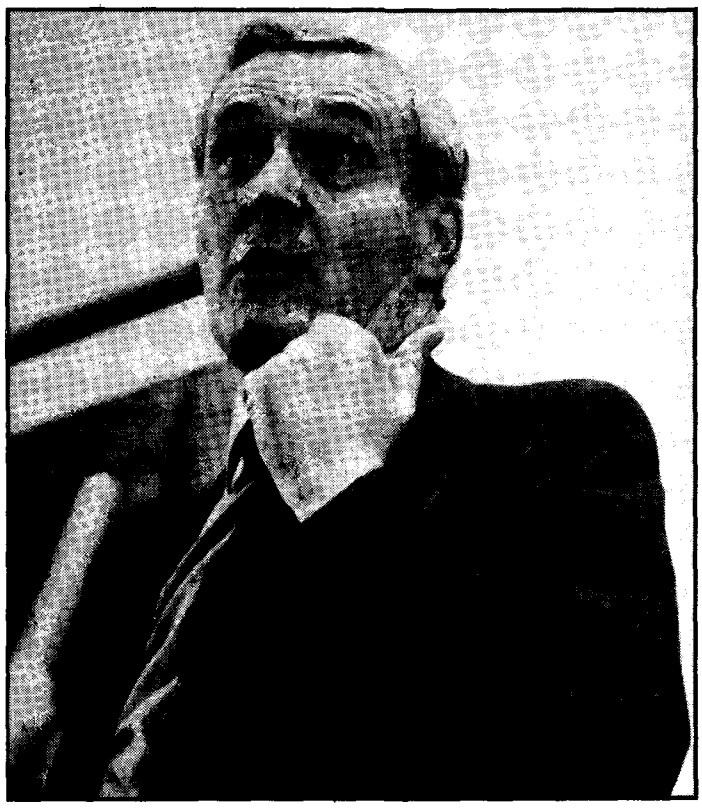
The Moving Left Show

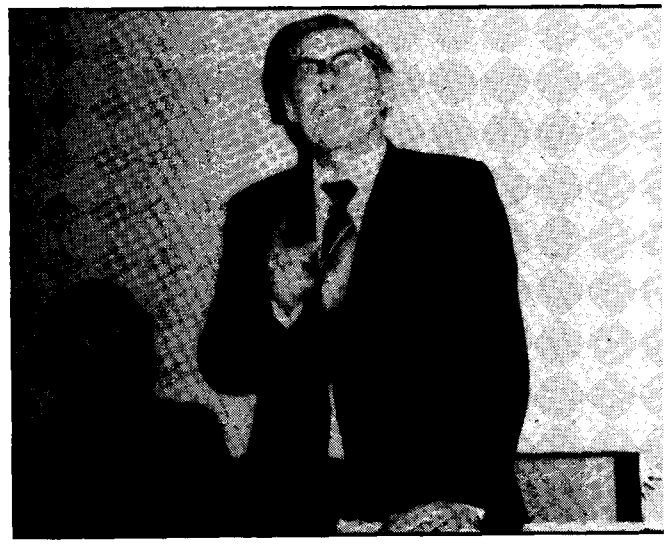
OCTOBER 29 30 31



Tony Benn and Italian Communist leader Giorgio Napolitano discuss the way forward to socialism in western Europe, in a debate on the Friday evening jointly sponsored with New Socialist.

One of the most crowded sessions was Today's Marx

Miner's leader Mick McGahey makes a point in one of the trade u sessions, chaired by builders' union official Pete Ca



Would people come to an unaccustomed venue in London's E End?

Would the principal speakers turn up?

My God, two days to go and it looks as if the small creche staff wil overwhelmed by late-registering children.

In the end it was all right on the night. Full-time organisers Newman and Sally Townsend, with dozens of voluntary help made the Moving Left Show the most successful event of its kind years, reaching far beyond the usual audience.

These pages present a very selective record of 1,700 people's we end at Queen Mary College on October 30-

Marxism Today is proud to have been their h

photos: Pat Mantle/Morning Star

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The Moving Left Show

OCTOBER 29 30 31

Saturday lunchtime was enlivened by the unpredictable Pookie Snackenburger.

Jackie Atkin reminds them that more than lip-service is needed for feminism.

photo: Nick Townsend

A small monster in the well-used creche.

Ex-BBC TV Programme Controller Stuart Hood speaks in the TV session, chaired by TV AM's Anna Ford.

photo : Pat Mantle/Morning Star

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NOTES

PRICE INCREASE

As you have probably noticed, we have had to increase the cover price of *Marxism Today* to 75p, owing to increased production costs. This is the first price increase since last October, and we intend to maintain this price for at least a year.

COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION

John Kieffer writes: The Socialist Society has recently published a pamphlet by Mike Rustin *Comprehensive Education after 18: A Socialist Strategy.* The pamphlet presents a critique of the exclusive and elitist structure of higher education in Britain, and argues that socialists should support a universal right to education after 18, not dependent on academic qualification. It links the highly stratified pattern of British higher education, which imposes a pervasive academic control over the school system, to a continuing structure of class domination. In discussing the various means of lessening the stratification of post-18 education, Mike Rustin concludes that a regional structure, preferably under elected control, holds out the most feasible hope of creating 'comprehensive universities' which could contribute to a more democratic culture. The pamphlet is available from the Socialist Society, 7 Carlisle Street, London W1, for £1 (includes p&p).

SCIENCE WITHIN SOCIALISM

Richard Clarke writes: A one day conference *Science within Socialism: Critique and Celebration* will be held on Saturday 4th December at Marx House, Clerkenwell Green, London EC1. The conference is organised by the Science and Technology Subcommittee of the Communist Party and will be looking at the problems and achievements of science in the socialist countries. Countries to be looked at include the USSR, Eastern Europe, China, Cuba and Africa. More information available from the Science Committee, CPGB, 16 St John Street, London EC1.

RACISM AND SCHOOLS

Dave Cook writes: On Saturday January 29 there will be a consultative conference on racism and schools, at County Hall, London SE1, organised by the Race Relations Committee of the Communist Party. The Conference aims to draw on the experience of people working in schools or interested in school education. We hope that parents, young people, trade unionists and people active in community politics and people from different ethnic groups will attend as well as school teachers and educationalists. Farrukh Dondy, a contributor to *Race Today,* and author of *The Black Explosion in British Schools* will make an opening contribution. There will then be workshops on education for a multi-cultural society, mother-tongue teaching, teacher unions and racism, and teachers from ethnic minorities. Registration costs £2 (50p unwaged). For more information contact Racism and Schools Conference, 16 St John Street, London EC1.

RIGHTS OF WOMEN

Jenny Earle writes: Alan Walker's article in the September issue of *Marxism Today* expressed a concern with the Left's failure to develop a social strategy. And if the Labour Party's Discussion Documents on Taxation and Social Security are anything to go by then women needn't expect much from 'Socialism in the 80s'. ROW has published a detailed response to these pamphlets as we think it is important to expose the extent to which proposals for reform tend to reinforce oppressive definitions of women, and continue to deny women independent access to state income support. We would like to encourage wider discussion of the question of income maintenance and planning for women's needs. Our paper is available from the ROW office (send an SAE) and we can provide speakers for meetings. More information ROW, 374 Grays Inn Road, London WC1. Tel 01-278 6349.

CABLEPOWER

The conference on new media technology, *Cablepower,* mentioned in last month's notes, is being organised by the ICA, not by Comedia. The conference is on the 4-5 December. More information from the ICA Box Office tel 01 930 3647.

ACTION DEFEATS THE BILL

George Wake writes: The Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions have recently published a pamphlet *'Action Defeats the Bill'.* The pamphlet tells the story of the defeat of the Industrial Relations Act — important reading for those who are planning to defeat Tebbit's anti-trade union legislation. This pamphlet is particularly aimed at shop stewards and trade union organisations. If you would like copies, write, with a donation if possible, to George Wake, LCDTU, 148 Glenny Road, Barking, Essex IG11 8QQ.

FALKLANDS — SPECIAL BRIEF

Mike Gatehouse writes: The latest in an increasingly impressive 'Special Brief' series from the Latin America Bureau is a book entitled *Falklands/Malvinas — Whose Crisis?* Virtually the length of a Penguin special, this is no pot boiler. The Brief's purpose is to analyse the underlying assumptions behind Britain's military action and to c lenge the pro-war consensus. It focuses cifically on the islands' internal economy the conflicting British and Argentine cla to sovereignty, on the historical relations between the two countries, and on the n tary dictatorship in Argentina since 19 There is also a short appendix which look the role of the popular press in Britain forming public opinion during the crisi

A very good buy at £1.95 from L 1 Amwell St, London EC1R 1UL.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Robbie Burns is a lecturer in German a Warwick University.

Eileen Phillips is a member of the *Femi Review* collective.

Martin Upham works for the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation and is prospective Labour parliamentary candidate for Harborough.

Anne Showstack Sassoon is the autho *Gramsci's Politics,* has a full-time job and six year old daughter.

Gerry Pocock is the head of the Communist Party International Department.

Sam Aaronovitch is the author of *The Road from Thatcherism* and a member of Communist Party Economic Committee

Stuart Hall is co-author of *Policing the Crisis.*

Peter Jenkins is political columnist for *The Guardian.*

Timothy Hollins is Cable Researcher i the Broadcasting Research Unit at the British Film Institute, an independent academic research body funded jointly b the BBC, the BFI and the Markle Foundation.

Keith Cowling is Professor of Economi at Warwick University and a member of Communist Party Economic Committee

Leon Broome works in advertising and

John Bull is a graphic designer. They perform in a comedy duo, 'What the Blazes?'

Thomas O'Malley works at Local Radi Workshop.

Chris Stapleton writes for *Black Music.*

Peter Dormer is a freelance writer.

Jim Fyrth teaches trade union studies.

Bernard Crick is Professor in the Department of Politics and Sociology, Birkbeck College, London and author of *George Orwell: a life.*

Jon Bloomfield is a member of CND's Executive Council.

Dennis Ogden lectures at the Polytechni of Central London.

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